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THE FEELING FOR NATURE

IN

SCOTTISH POETRY

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THE FEELING FOR NATURE

IN

SCOTTISH POETRY

BY

JOHN VEITCH

PROFESSOR OF LOGIC AND RHETORIC IN THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW;
AUTHOR OF 'THE HISTORY AND POETRY OF
THE SCOTTISH BORDER,' ETC.

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INTRODUCTORY.

CHAPTER I.

THE FEELING FOR NATURE—ITS VARIOUS FORMS.

To me it has often seemed curious and puzzling that at any time in the history of Scottish national feeling, and especially national poetry, there should not have been a deep, quick, and impassioned emotion for the hills, the glens, the burns, and the gleaming rivers of the country,—such as the Tweed and the Nith, the Teviot and the Tay. It has even appeared to me surprising that the mists in the glens and on the hills, with their breaks, their wreaths, and the cleaving glints of sunshine through them, should not always have been to the onlooker a source of wonder and delight. How the wavy lines of mountains which stretch across

the Southern Uplands of Scotland from far down in Wigtownshire, through the counties of Dumfries and Peebles to the Moorfoots and the plains of Lothian, should not have been a joy to all their near dwellers and beholders, instead of a sort of horror, I have had a difficulty in understanding. Since I was a boy—now, alas! a long time ago—with fishing-rod in hand, I do not remember when I did not take unalloyed delight in the wimplings of the burn, in the sheen of the bracken, in the grey rock, in the purple of the heather, and the solitude of the moorlands. Once I remember, when the gloaming was coming on in the Posso Burn—forty-six years ago—I whipped up my line round my small fishing-rod, hitched my basket on my back, and though it was eight o'clock, and an August evening, would not be comforted until, striking westwards and upwards away from home, —the setting sun perhaps stirring and goading me on,—I climbed the height,—"speeled" it,—wandered down Kirkhope with a curious pathetic heart, for the grey sky overshadowed me, and the burn moaned, and there was an ominous veiling mist on the confronting mass of Dollar Law; and I got home therefrom about midnight, some nine miles away, through the darkness and the calm that had

settled, like a dream, in the valley of the Manor. But I did not find then, and I do not find greatly now, that many people share this feeling. Why, I thought to myself, why not love the bracken, the bent, and the heather? These were then the dear things to me—the dearest then, as they are the dearest now. I did not then know or ask anything about the causes or the reasonableness of my feelings. I was content to live in the world of simple and spontaneous enjoyment. And if this would but continue through life, I almost feel sure that human joy, if not blessedness, would be at its full.

I had not then heard of Æsthetics, or Evolution, or Heredity. I have heard of them since, especially the two latter, and much of it to little purpose. As to the heredity I have some sort of dim faith, and I can hardly believe otherwise than that somehow those Manor and Tweeddale glens have had a gradually educating and moulding effect on the many generations of the men who lived before me there, and from whom I come, and that my present state of feeling is somehow due to the earth and sky visions with which they were familiar. Be this as it may, I confess to having from the earliest time this somewhat strange delight in free wild nature, and a surprise that any one should

not have loved it as I love it. But I find it is not so. The feeling for nature has no doubt grown greatly within the last fifty years, but I rather fear that some other feelings that may accompany it—perhaps akin to it—are frequently mistaken for it. I find sportsmen seeking grouse and hares eagerly, caring little—caring at least only secondarily—for the moorland, with its spaces of glowing heather and of golden bent. The sport and the "bag"—big and little—is the ambition. I find even the angler, carrying his rod up the beautiful and lovely burn, more intent on filling his basket than in brooding on the braes. I find, too, the citizen out for a holiday and the picnicker laudably enough rejoicing in the open haugh and moorland, but this delight is often unquestionably not very far removed from that which accompanies fresh air and a better digestion. The free pure love of nature is different from all this,—as different as emotion is from sensation. They are few, indeed, who reach a supreme satisfaction on the wilds, who delight in them merely for what they are, and who find in them, as there may be found, the near presence of a Personal yet Supreme Power, whose communion is never awanting to the solitary lover and worshipper of nature; and when this feeling rises to its true strength, and finds out-

let in sympathetic and imaginative expression—whether in verse or prose—what has been said of poetry in general may emphatically be said of nature poetry: "It redeems from decay the visitations of the Divinity in man."

I have written these lines to explain in part how I have been led to think of the course of inquiry embodied in the present volume. I wished to know how far one's feeling for nature had been shared in by other people before the present time,—how it had grown up possibly from small beginnings or lower forms, and become what it now is, to some men at least. It is a matter of curious speculation to find how the same scenes in the past affected people centuries ago,—whether it was in precisely the same way as now,—if not, how far and in what modes different,—and if there has been growth, accretion of richness, how that has taken place, or, in modern though not unobjectionable phraseology, been evolved. Such is the problem, historical and philosophical, of the present volume. Obviously the scope of the investigation might be greatly extended—extended, for example, to Greek and Roman poetry and to modern literature, especially Italian and German, and to modern art. This, however, I do not undertake. Meanwhile, I do not seek to go

beyond the poetry of Scotland. And in this sphere it will, I believe, be found that we have a specially typical illustration of the course and laws of development of the feeling for nature,—and such there as is fitted to throw light on its order and progress in the literature of other countries.

Of modern Scottish poetry in its relation to the world of outward nature, there are two obvious features. First, there is love for free, wild nature, and the objects that fill up the landscape—as flower and tree, stream, haugh, and glen,—and there is a tendency to indulge in full and minute description, more or less faithful. Burns, Leyden, Scott, and Hogg afford ample illustrations of this general characteristic.

Secondly, there is an imaginative sympathy for the grand and powerful in nature—as mountain height and cataract, the foaming flood, the force of ocean, and the dark wind-swept wood as it sways in the storm. Of the feeling for this aspect of nature we have notable examples in the delineations of Leyden, Scott, and John Wilson.

These two features have not always characterised Scottish poetry; to the full they are true of it only in comparatively recent times. Our poetry has grown to a love of outward nature—a free,

pure, full love of it — only after a long period of time. The feeling for natural beauty and grandeur which now exists has come through our past history as the flower comes slowly on the plant. It is very much like a free outburst of the full blossom after a long period of slow development and blind yet careful groping for the appropriate sunlight.

I have said the feeling for Nature. But what, it may be asked, is the nature of which I speak? To this I reply succinctly, that by it I mean the outward world of the senses, as this lies before us untouched by the hand of man. I mean, primarily, that free, apparently spontaneously developed world, which is presented to the senses—the world of meadow and of plain, of water and of glen, of moorland and mountain,—as it has been shaped for us by the intermediate agencies of the past and the present forces, mechanical and other—sunshine, atmosphere, rain, snow, ice, wind, and storm, —and as it contains objects, animate and inanimate forms, due directly at least to the development of what are known as natural energies. These may be ultimately unknown to science; for this always stops at the fact, however general, and the last *how* and *why* always lie beyond the fact. Back-

wards we must go into the unknown to science. Yet somehow nature has arisen, undirected and unenergised by man. He is the spectator, not the creator of things.

Man, no doubt, has to some considerable extent here and there interfered with, changed, and modified the natural condition of things. He has built dwelling-houses, towns, manufactories; he has made canals, roads, and bridges. These have their interests and advantages—they are even our necessities—and they contribute to our pleasures and comforts; but interest in these, and in all the ingenuity expended upon them, is not an interest in free nature or its spontaneous works. In painting, or even in poetry, these may, under certain conditions, be introduced into the picture, and made to fuse with it, giving what is called a human interest; but this is not the kind of interest with which we are now concerned. The care for these, regarded in themselves, is dictated essentially by the feeling for the useful, the comfortable, the money-gaining; and this is not the feeling for free nature.

As in every case of definition, where the object defined is real, there are marginal things which come near it, and yet are hardly included in its scope: this is the case with regard to nature. We

have here the garden and the ornamental park; these have both been made by the hand of man, and in so doing he has made use of nature and natural objects for his purpose and in his work. But this element of making and setting nature in an order, arranging it and telling it how to shape itself, excludes both works from the sphere of free development, and thus, so far, from nature itself. But, of course, within even this limit free nature will intrude, for we have flowers and trees—to be taken as nature itself makes them; we have light and shade, the notes of birds, and the sparkle even of the artificial lake; and thus there is a mingling of the free and the formed in the same compass. This cannot be called spontaneous or untouched nature, yet it may be beautiful in its way, in its order and symmetry and proportionate arrangement; and the free natural objects in it—the flowers, trees, and greenery enclosed—may touch the heart and tempt the eye to roam beyond the walls of the garden and the park, and find in these eventually, by themselves, a simple, pure, intense, and unselfish delight. It will, indeed, be found that the garden formed one of the earliest, if not the very earliest, object of poetical and artistic pleasure, and that it was through an æsthetical satisfaction in it that

men were led to the freer, wider beauty of the outlying world.

But Feeling for nature requires also explanation. It means, of course, our feeling in relation to this outward world. This is very varied; but its essential element in all cases, as thus employed, is that of liking for or interest in this world. And here it is that we must be precise in stating he different forms and moods of this interest, for thus only can we trace it from its lower forms up to the highest—the pure, disinterested delight in nature which springs from the combined exercise of the senses and the imagination, and which is known as the æsthetical emotion.

I do not think it likely that at any stage in human history the aspects and the objects of outward nature could be perfectly indifferent to man as sources of sense-feeling. These could not be merely noted or observed by our apprehension as things *per se*, so to speak, and divorced entirely from sensations of pleasure and pain; for the great majority of our sense-impressions come to us in the form of agreeable and disagreeable sensations. The intellectual energy is in this sphere, to a very large extent, inseparably identified with the sentient or sensational. Light, sound, odour, taste, come to us

uniformly as pleasures or pains, and this according to their degree, quality, and the state of our sentiency. Outward nature was thus never absolutely indifferent to man. But the question arises, What are the stages of its interest?

The first stage of interest in outward nature would probably be that which arises from the state of agreeable sensation,—what may be called the organically agreeable, inasmuch as the feeling of pleasure is directly connected with impressions from without on the organs of sense—is, in fact, the reflex of sense-energy. This state may be described as one of open-air feeling, and the chief sources of pleasure, and the things principally noted, would naturally be the sunshine and diffused brightness, the breeze, and the general fresh aspect of earth and sky, connecting itself with a consciousness of life and sensuous enjoyment. This state of feeling is no doubt capable of expression, and readily lends itself as an auxiliary to poetic description; but in itself it is too vague and indefinite to become the subject of pictorial delineation, for a picture essentially demands vivid details. A certain sense of contentment with nature is the condition of æsthetical feeling and delineation, rather than the subject of it; it leads us to observe, to group, and

to describe. This general state of pleasurable feeling in reference to outward nature is, of course, only possible in regard to one great side of it—the soft and agreeable. Darkness, storm, cold — the hard and pleasureless side—would at this stage be simply repulsive.

The second stage of interest, and one that may quite well coexist with the first, would be a feeling of liking for and contentment with the beneficent aspects of nature,—such as of themselves help to satisfy human needs. In this stage, men would prize meadow-land and hillside verdure as fit for pasture, the fountain and the clear running stream, the shade of the tree — whatever naturally and without effort on their part contributed to render life possible and pleasant.

The third stage is one that might quite well continue to coexist with those now mentioned, but which was likely to follow them historically. This is the interest that would attach to land cultivated and yielding crops,—to land, in fact, made useful by the hand of man, made nutritive and subservient to human life — the chaotic made orderly. All agriculture is a war with earth; and it is one in which the subdued earth pays back a rich tribute to its conqueror. It is thus a symbol of the power

of man—the deepest and most fundamental human interest—and of his victory over nature; and it involves the elements of order and arrangement, in which may be found a kind of beauty that commends itself to the intellect. This form of the agreeable in outward nature, becoming inseparably interwoven with the useful, has been the prevailing, though not the purest or highest, form of the æsthetical feeling relating to it since Homer downwards to our own time. It has proved widely beneficial; but through its exclusiveness and mingling of material and æsthetical feeling, also incalculably hurtful and degrading. It at first necessarily shut out from the sphere of human interest whatever was opposed to tillage—whatever formed an obstacle to be overcome—as woodland and rock, and also whatever could not be subdued to utility by the hand of man, as mountain, lake, and sea. Hence these were regarded as curses or evils to man, to be deprecated, even branded as imperfections in the system of the world. And thus all the noble and purifying æsthetic feeling of which they are the sources was lost to mankind, while this narrow conviction and feeling lasted. And they are so lost now, wherever the agricultural, the utilitarian, or money-making idea prevails.

The fourth stage is that of free, pure nature-feeling. This arises when men come to love the aspect and the objects of outward nature for themselves, to have a free delight in the mere contemplation of them. Now beneficence and utility, in the customary and narrow sense, fall entirely out of view. The things of nature, the impressions on the senses, are loved, sought, gazed on simply as such. In beneficence and utility the interest of nature arises from an end beyond it,—human sustenance, welfare, comfort. The agreeable end is the source of the agreeable feeling. Not so in the free, pure nature-feeling. Here the object and aspect of nature is the direct, absolute source of the gratification. It has not interest for us as a means; it is ultimate, an end in itself. This is the conception of free, pure beauty—it, like goodness, like truth, like personality, like God, is to us absolutely satisfying. Our æsthetical faculties find their full activity terminated in it, and we rest there as having come on one side of our nature to our final limit.

The reaching of this stage of feeling marks a great advance in civilisation. And it is only possible, as a general national characteristic, after agriculture and the arts have progressed to such a

degree as to make men feel that they are no longer in daily struggle with earth and elements. It means, in fact, reconcilement with that outward, which at first presented itself to man as a thing to be overcome. The war between the wants of man and the forces of nature has ceased, or man is in the daily consciousness of being the master—of having his physical needs supplied; and now he has time, opportunity, and leisure for that free, pure pleasure—to listen to that still small voice which solicited him from the first, but which was lost in the bustle of daily toil, and in the pressing desire to make his physical position on earth secure. Even after this stage of interest has been conquered by the poet for the race, how frequently is it lost to the individual,—lost through the hard circumstances of his lot, or lost through the gradual debasement that grows round his nature through the pursuit of low aims, love of littleness, of gain, of gossip, or baser gratifications!

It is obvious that this feeling may find outlet in regard to objects of particular senses—say colours and sounds; or in regard to combinations of each separate set of sensations—as blending of colours, harmony of sound; or by seeking to combine,—to make a synthesis or unity of the different

sensations of the different senses—as colours with odours—colours, forms, and sounds.

For a complete unity there must be, in order to the highest poetic effect,—such a fusion that all the parts or features can be taken in by the eye and mind at once, and taken in as a common whole; otherwise we have only a series of isolated and therefore comparatively feeble impressions. How well does one, who felt the process thoroughly, put this!—

"When we came in front of that tall rock
That eastward looks, I there stopped short and stood,
Tracing the lofty barrier with my eye
From base to summit; such delight I found
To note in shrub and tree, in stone and flower,
That intermixture of delicious hues
Along so vast a surface, all at once,
In one impression, by connecting force
Of their own beauty, imaged in the heart." *

The æsthetical activity may deal with these singly or in groups when presented to the senses, or it may seek, when they are absent, to recall or

* Wordsworth, *Poems on Naming of Places*, 1800.

present them. In either case it will make a picture, for all synthesis of sense-impressions is pictorial, a picture to the mind of what is before the eye, or of what at a given time was there, or of what might have been presented from its harmonious combinations. In all cases, however, there is need for, and impulse towards, observation of details. Strong, pure nature-feeling leads to accurate and minute observation, and this in its turn is quickened and nourished by love. We dote alike on the features when presented to sense, and on the mental picture which we make of them, when they are no longer present.

Of this free nature-feeling there are various stages. It will differ according to the kinds of the natural impressions or sensations to which we give superior attention. Some of these approach more closely than others to the purely physical organism and its wants, such as odours, isolated sounds, and general sensorial agreeable feeling. Tastes may come in, but they are hardly æsthetical. When our interest is in such as these, nature-feeling is at its lowest. Again, when we rise to a predominating interest in colours, forms, delicate sounds, and eye-perceptions generally, we reach a sphere more removed than the other from mere physical agree-

ableness. There is in these more intellectual activity than in the others, more synthesis or combination. The intellect and imagination go hand in hand in making unities out of diffusion and expanse. The spaces of earth and heaven become clothed and vivid in colour and form. We go out from ourselves and our mere physical sensations to what brings us a pure and impersonal joy. Now we have cast beneficence, utility, physical or organic agreeableness far behind us, and we realise emotion as pure as it is possible for us to do under the condition of sense-impressions.

A further discrimination must here be made. Nature has two sides—a soft, agreeable, soothing side; and a hard, stern, at first fearful and forbidding side—of power, vastness, height, and storm. It has soft flowers and meadow verdure; it has high and hard mountains, floods, cataracts, snows, and seething lake and ocean waves. Working its way through beneficence and utility, the nature-feeling first firmly rests in the soft and agreeable or beautiful; fear and a sense of non-reconcilement keep, with other causes, the mind long from the æsthetic gratification of the sterner side—from a pure, full joy in grandeur and sublimity. So long, however, as we are debarred from the full sense of the grand

and the sublime in things, we are very far short of the complete action of our æsthetical powers. We are cut off by the lower passion of fear from the highest, most ennobling, and most purifying gratifications which the æsthetic sense, whether dealing with what is presented to us or is capable of being represented by us, can afford. Man is only fully reconciled to nature, only then reaches the height and the completeness of his æsthetic consciousness, when the soft and the beautiful freely attract, when the grand and the sublime, eviscerated of fear, hold him by the mixed spell of joy and awe. For thus is he raised above himself. Fear is personal, self-regarding; the emotion of the sublime is impersonal, disinterested, heroic, the ally of all that is great in intellect and grand in will.

When the interest in outward nature has become pure, it may still be represented in the poet only indirectly, or in subordination to a different interest. Thus it is in Homer. Supposing the Homeric feeling for nature to be pure (and there are many indications that that stage is reached in the Homeric poems), yet it is not primary. Homer does not delight in picturing nature for its own sake. This at least is not a characteristic feature of his. He brings in the aspects of it in illustra-

tion of human actions and human incident. His interest in these is the greater; and he seeks to make them vivid by natural allusion and analogy. But even this is an important advance beyond the beneficent and utilitarian epochs, which are also fully represented in Homer. The true, pure nature-feeling is, however, a direct, face-to-face, absolutely self-satisfied communion with sensible things. It has no alloy of extraneous interest.

But there is a fifth point of view. In dealing with outward nature we cannot apparently rest in mere description, however real, accurate, and full. The best picture is still, as it were, something outside of us. It is objective, and we desire somehow to bring it into direct relationship with ourselves, —to set it within the sphere of our conscious life. Nature cannot remain for us a mere gallery of pictures, or a simple panoramic display. We must be fused with it ere we can rest, or feel satisfied that we have penetrated to the true being of things. This impulse pressed strongly on the Greek mind; it has pressed on every people who have risen above organic feeling, or a mere sense of fitnesses, or contentment with gaudy sensuousness. It is a yearning for the invisible in fusion with the visible —for a higher presence around us, that can speak to

the soul through the senses. With the ancients, particularly the Greeks, this longing issued in the impersonation of nature, in mythology, and thus naturally in their characteristic art of sculpture. With the moderns—particularly in Wordsworth—it has issued in a pure symbolism. Greek art clothed itself in the forms of the idealising imagination; modern art delights distinctively in the subtle suggestion of the Impassioned or Symbolical Imagination.

The mode characteristic of the Greek mind,—of bringing the sensuously inanimate around us into consciousness as but a part of its sphere,—is simply that of projecting definite human personality into things and their aspects. It represents things and the forces at work in outward nature as persons, living, feeling, acting—after the type of man. In a word, with the Greeks outward causes are wills—not blind forces, not invariable antecedents. The root-idea of nature is a series of wills—personally independent of each other, yet subordinate within certain limits, and variously endowed by love or hate, by kindly or malevolent purpose. The germ-notion of the human will is transported into nature, in its various spheres, and clothed with a potency superior to its original. This is true equally

of Greek and Roman imagination. And these wills manifest themselves to us in the action of the elements; in the motions of sun, moon, and stars; in air, stream, ocean, and wood; in light and darkness, in sound, and in silence. They give the kindly fruits of the earth, corn and vine. They foster the new-born produce that springs unsown, and they send down on the sown crop copious rain from heaven. The creatures of the field are their peculiar care: the gentle sheep, and the wild beasts of the chase—every side of nature, inanimate and animate—is under the sway of one or other of them.* The sensuous is but the clothing of invisible wills, that have the power even to stand revealed, if they choose, in definite form, akin at least to the human. There is, however, beyond this the dark, ill-defined, somewhat dread conception of an ultimate impersonal fate that is superior to every will, be it human or divine, representing doubtless that side of nature

* Cf. Virgil, *Georgics*, I., l. 1 *et seq.*

"Pan, ovium custos, tua si tibi Mænala curæ,
Adsis, o Tegeæe favens, oleæque Minerva
Inventrix, uncique puer monstrator aratri,
Et teneram ab radice ferens, Sylvane, cupressum
Dique deæque omnes, studium quibus arva tueri;
Quique novas alitis non ullo semine fruges,
Quique satis largum cœlo demittitis imbrem."—l. 17-23.

where inflexible law appears supreme, and tramples on all personality of men or gods. Impersonal cause is the dark background of Greek mythology; personal wills people nature, and are the nearest of the invisible to man.

Indeed, the classical habit was to represent even the course of human suggestions, the thoughts arising naturally according to the laws of association, as direct inspiration from a god or divine power. Whether the mind was influenced by the appearances of nature, or whether it was led to action or resolution by the workings of thought and feeling, all was referred to a power above its own personality—to direct action upon it of the divine. This is everywhere evident in Homer and in Virgil. We can see at once how much more strongly such a conception of the source of our thoughts would operate as a spring of action, than the cold, calm conviction simply of what is right and fitting in given circumstances.* No act is done, not even that of self-slaughter, apart from the direct action of the gods. The self-wounded Dido does not obtain release from life until Iris, sent by Juno, glides down the sky, with saffron wings dew-

* Cf. Virgil, *Æneid*, IV., l. 554, where Mercury appears to Æneas and inspires his resolution.

besprent, trailing a thousand various colours in the face of the sun, and alights above her head. The lock is cut, and the life passes into air.*

It was the god of Sleep that waved over the temples of Palinurus a bough dripping with Lethe's dews, and closed his swimming eyes; and as the pilot was hurled by the power headlong into the streaming waves, "Sleep himself soared high on his wings into the yielding air." † A finer idealisation of incident could hardly be conceived. And no better illustration could be given of the philosophic theory of occasional causes—developed during the middle ages and in the course of modern speculative thought—according to which every second or finite cause is merely an antecedent made effectual by direct divine operation.

These impersonations, moreover, were to the poets no mere abstract representations or shadowy figures. They had hue and form of the most definite and pictorial kind. Pan, the lover of sheep and shepherds, the first fashioner of the pipe of reeds, the singer in the woodlands, Arcadia's own god, came to the love-lorn Gallus "crimsoned all over with blood-red elder-berries and vermilion." ‡ Old Silenus could be caught asleep in his cave, his veins

* *Æneid*, IV., 700. † *Æneid*, V., 854. ‡ *Eclogue* X.

swollen by the wine-god of yesterday; and roguish Ægle, the fairest of the Naiads, paints his forehead and his temples blood-red with mulberry-juice.* Silvanus is pictured carrying a young cypress-tree, fresh torn up by its roots.† The father of the wine-press is called upon to strip off his buskins, to bare his legs, and plunge them in the new must.

While the fifth stage of interest in nature is thus typified by the ideal Impersonation of the Greeks and Romans, there is still another if analogous stage, and that is the Symbolism of modern poetry, the result of the working of the Symbolical Imagination. The highest form of this is seen in Wordsworth. What is it? How does it differ, how far does it agree with the Greek impersonation? How precisely does the symbolical imagination accomplish its work? It sees and it feels in things, in the aspects of outward nature, the symbols of our own life,—of a life or spirit at least akin to our own—to our feelings, our emotions, and our passions: it reads lessons of encouragement for us when we are despairing, lessons of rebuke when our hearts are proud and uplifted, lessons of tenderness and love; in a word, it makes the apparently

* *Eclogue* VI. † *Georgics*, I.

inanimate things around us speak a human language and appeal to the universal heart of mankind. But no Scottish poet had ever done this, no man whatever before Wordsworth had so translated, so interpreted, that apparently antagonistic, yet now altogether reconcilable, world of outward nature. And, finally, it differs wholly from Greek art in that it somehow, in reason or by faith, feels that there is one Power, one great Power, at work in all this glorious world—a power one at least in its aims and sympathies with the spirit of man. There is here at least a unity which, vindicable or not on grounds of speculative reason, is a goal and resting-place for the spirit and the heart of man—for many men who have been of open vision and of pure heart; and it is not for us, in the face of their feeling and their comfort in life, to say that the normal man may not truly get this vision and this stay and comfort.

The stages of interest in nature which I have indicated are connected by a rational link,—by grounds in reason. They form successive epochs in æsthetical and human development. But it must be noted that while the earlier are found alone, they do not necessarily die out when the later arise. On the contrary, the later are usually

only supplements of the earlier,—grew out of them, in fact, but do not abolish them, or merely hold them in their own greater complexity. The stages often continue to coexist in their individuality.

Another remark must be made—viz., that while these stages represent the course of the development of æsthetical feeling, the predominant manifestation by any one of them in a particular epoch will be regulated as well by individual temperament as by national circumstances — by, for example, the degree of advancement in the mechanical arts and agriculture. Men might be quite ready to feel some of the aspects of outward nature, so far as general circumstances are concerned. They might, however, have to wait the advent of the poet-seer, whose superior insight into things was needed to teach them how to read the lesson that is ever waiting and open before them. And not unfrequently a former style of literary art or culture keeps its place as a veil to blind men to the true verities alike of art and nature. This it requires not only poetic insight but high moral courage to draw aside, that men may truly see; and these qualities are not always combined. Theocritus, Lucretius, and Wordsworth are each to be met with only once in two thousand years.

All the kinds of interest in nature which I have noted imply and accept the outward as it is presented to the senses, without raising questions of origin, permanence, or issue in regard to the order of things. But these speculative questions were raised at a very early period by men, and they have received various solutions. The feeling of wonder in regard especially to the grander aspects of nature, —to the movements of the sun, moon, and stars,— to comets, eclipses, meteors,—is one that has led not only to philosophical questionings, but to particular forms and modifications of naure-feeling. All profound intellectual questioning, particularly on the material order of things, stirs a corresponding thrill of emotion in the human heart. Whether we suppose that we can solve the problem theistically or atheistically, or conclude that we cannot solve it at all,—that it is wholly transcendent,— a corresponding series of imaginative emotions rises in the soul. In antiquity, the poet in whom preeminently are found fused the deepest intellectual questionings and the strongest imaginative emotion on this subject, was Lucretius. It is a profoundly interesting inquiry as to how with him the speculative theory led to some of the most moving forms of imaginative feeling.

There is still another point of view of outward nature which has important æsthetical results. We may ask, is this order which we observe and believe in absolutely uniform, concatenated backwards, it may be, infinitely through causes, so that it goes on without possibility of arrest, interference, or mixture from supernatural agencies? If so, the mind is led out to the sublimity of a pitiless omnipotence, that knows no stay in its blind course, and has no knowledge or feeling regarding the sentiences that are somehow in the order of things. Or may a ghostly hand now and again touch the order of things, and show a power of modification and control? Much more, may a face, as from a sphere of spirit, gleam out of the earthly darkness occasionally on the sentient eye, or a ghostly sound quicken the sentient ear of man? If so, —whether really or simply in imagination,—we shall have the weird mingling of the supernatural with the natural in the poetic representations of things,—and nature will thus stand to our æsthetical workings in a very peculiar relationship. This element, superinduced upon things, may be made the source of peculiarly stirring and genuine artistic effect. Fairy, elf, warlock, wizard, witch, brownie, &c., the supernatural actors in all

forms of national poetry, testify to the depth and universality of the feeling. It may also be made, as it has been, the source of what is most grotesque, vulgar, and degrading in sensational excitement.

CHAPTER II.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES—THE NATURE AND LAWS OF THE BEAUTIFUL, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NATURAL OBJECTS.

I SHOULD think it out of place here to attempt to give a complete theory of the æsthetical feelings and judgments. But the æsthetical terms are used commonly in such a vague way, that I must indicate as definitely as I can the senses in which I propose to employ them. With this view it will be necessary to say something regarding the grounds and principles of æsthetical judgment, and the various forms of the æsthetical feelings.

To the question, What is the Beautiful in nature? or generally, What is the Beautiful as an object? the answer has been given that the common name *beautiful* is given to objects, not because of their proper nature, but because of their effect on

the mind or conscious subject. They produce in us a sentiment of the same nature, although they are different in their own kinds. The essence of the beautiful is to be sought simply in the essence of the æsthetical feeling. The feeling of the beautiful precedes and excites the judgment, because people feel things to be beautiful without knowing *why*. The judgment only objectifies the feeling: we say the object is beautiful, as we say the fire is hot.*

It seems to me that this view implies virtually the giving up of a theory of the Beautiful—in fact, of Art in general. This is a point which should not be readily conceded. It is quite possible that the consciousness of the precise qualities in an object, which lead us to regard it as beautiful, is not actually present to us while we feel it to be so. But for the same reason, precisely, we ought to give up all inquiry into the grounds of what we call good, right, just, and true. It is a mistake, moreover, to suppose that the mere feeling or sentiment in such a case can ground a judgment. Feeling is really by itself blind; and there is always along with it some apprehension of quality—some knowledge, dim it may be, intermingled with it, which

* Cf. Rabier, *Psychologie*, p. 163, as representative of this view.

regulates the judgment. And further, it is unwarrantable to place the sentiment of the beautiful on the same level as the sensation of heat, and its cause as obscure to the senses. The object of vision, for example, which we regard as beautiful, is there before us with its definite qualities—form and colour — and, in the first place at least, the feeling of the beautiful arises directly from the apprehension of these; whereas in the case of the sensations, the cause of the heat or cold is to the senses occult, and a matter to be discovered only after patient analysis of what is hidden from immediate view. The direct apprehension of the qualities of the beautiful object even invites us to pause on what we see, and try to find out what the properties are which excite the emotion, and whether we can make a classification of them.

The difficulties of the question as to the nature or essence, objectively considered, of the Beautiful, may, I think, in a measure be cleared by considering the twofold character of the grounds of the Beautiful in our judgment and feeling.

In the first place, we may have what I should call a direct ground or cause of the feeling and judgment of the Beautiful in an object. There are some objects so constituted as to form, and so

endowed as to colour, that the mere apprehension of them, and the accompanying act of the purely representative imagination, determine in us at once the æsthetical emotion. It is not material at present to refer to single qualities of form or colour; but in respect of composite objects—objects complex in form and varied in colouring—it will be found that a certain harmony of arrangement, in both cases, causes in the mind the emotion of the Beautiful, apart altogether, at least in the first instance, from any reference to aught beyond itself. We do not need to consider the expression or the symbolism that may be implied in the object; we have but to look at the object in itself to feel and to know that it is a beautiful thing. The nature and grounds of this feeling I shall seek immediately to explain.

In the second place, an object of such complexity and harmony as to be regarded as beautiful in itself, may further be felt to have an æsthetical power over us by its capacity of expression, symbolism, or suggestion. To the eye, the finest form of line is undoubtedly not the merely straight but the mingling of the straight and the curve; and in the curve there is suggestion of free motion and grace. The human form is the most harmoniously

complex object in nature; it is terminated by lines of flow and curve. Now, in themselves and in their combinations, such lines are æsthetically the most pleasing. But besides this, there may be, indeed there is, an expression, symbolism, or suggestion of qualities not visible—a suggestion of completeness, perfection, grace—it may be ease, freedom, power — which the imagination readily reads, and naturally associates with the object. Brightness of day is in itself pleasing; it is enhanced by its natural suggestion of cheerfulness and joy. There is an inexpressible promise, hope, and glory in the grey struggling dawn over our Scottish uplands; and when the hills shadow themselves beneath the westering sun on a September afternoon, there is a suggestion of quiet reflection and peace,—the sense of a heart in things speaking to the heart of the wayfarer who has been long on the wilds, which no splendour of noon had in the bright day known how to evoke. And when the gloaming folds the valleys, and the known becomes unfamiliar, the heart passes under the power of a world, the nearest we know to the unseen. The ruin suggests the sweep of time, its power, and the pathos of decay. We may almost suppose that the wallflower and the lichen love, while they

cling to, the ancient decaying tower. And this, it must be observed, is no arbitrary or accidental association: it is the symbolism implied in the very nature of the object. This has a native language of expression, and thus connects itself with qualities of the spiritual world wholly invisible, so that mind finds itself there in that outward—possibly finds even the workings of another mind, kindred to its own, with which it thus holds communion.

But, before going into details, we must distinguish the Beautiful, the True, the Good, the Useful. By the former, used in a somewhat loose and generic sense, we mean generally that which excites the various æsthetical feelings. It will hardly be disputed, in the first place, that there is a distinction between Truth and Beauty. Truth, generally speaking, is a harmony or uniformity between our judgments of things, and the things as they are presented, found, or apprehended in experience — between, in a word, our presentations and our representations; or truth may subsist in the consistency of one thought with another, or in the necessary implication of one judgment in another or others. That bodies gravitate is a truth; that $50+50=100$ is a truth. Essential truth is exemplified in the law of all valid reason-

ing. These, though general, even universal truths, do not excite any æsthetical feeling or judgment. There are truths, no doubt, which may, and do, excite the æsthetical emotion; but, clearly, they are of a kind which possess an element not comprised in their mere truth, or harmony with fact, or simple self-consistency.

Nor can we identify Beauty with Goodness. Every just act is good: the act of paying one's debts is right, but we can hardly call it beautiful. Here, too, no doubt, we may have beauty and goodness in the same act; but if so, the former is due to some element superadded to the mere rightness or goodness—the mere harmony with the moral law.

Beauty and Utility stand out in clear contrast. In the useful we have the double conception of means and end — the means of getting, doing, and realising something desirable in itself, or it may be for a further end. Building or having a house, possessing clothes, having money—all these are useful; having a teacher, having books, getting good advice—all are useful, for they are means to ends which we need or seek. But we do not identify such a relation with the beautiful. The utilities of life are even, as a rule, exclusive of the beauties of life; for the moment

we think of the use of a thing, we subordinate that thing to something beyond itself, so to speak —some purpose which it may accomplish, which we think desirable, and so we value it for this. But certainly that which is beautiful we regard as a good in itself—an end in itself—something to be valued for its own sake, for what it is—not for what it may be or become to us, in any form. There is all the difference between interest or interested affection, with the consequent desire of possession and realisation, and the free, pure, disinterested regard and feeling of which we are conscious in respect to what is simply beautiful. What is useful may no doubt be beautiful,—but it is not so from its utility; it has something superadded. Indeed the mind which is attracted by the end, purpose, value, desirableness of an object, is thinking and feeling out of the sphere of the beautiful, the grand, and the sublime. The concentration of the common mind on such an end is the reason why the beautiful in ordinary things, and nature, has so little popular influence — so little power of purification or refinement. This mind is only callous, blunted, sightless in presence of the beauty in familiar things which yet solicit its regard. It thus passes through the world without

getting the culture which the beautiful daily world is fitted and designed to give. No doubt the practical needs of life tend to withdraw the ordinary man from that aspect of things which gives the pure æsthetical pleasure. The farmer, who has to pay his rent, in looking at his sheep on the hillside, thinks rather of the promise of the fleece, and the good, marketable, physical condition which they show. This absorbs him; and it hardly, if at all, strikes him that the gentle, silent creatures that dot the green braes, pass the summer hours unconscious of any swift-coming fate, and give life and pathos to the solitude of the burn-heads, are in themselves and their surroundings sources of a contemplative regard and emotion—to some hearts as touching and as pure as it is priceless.

A wholly satisfactory answer to the question as to what is the nature or essence of the beautiful object—what is common to all objects which we name beautiful — has not yet been given. It is doubtful if the answer can be given, so as to be comprised in a single or cut-and-dry formula. The least satisfactory theory is perhaps the by no means uncommon one, that beauty lies in the expression of the unseen by the seen—of the spiritual by the material. This taken directly, or as

it is usually nakedly put, is very inadequate; for it leaves out of account altogether the nature of the spiritual or invisible which is to be expressed. It is this which gives character to the expression; it is this which determines our interest in the expression. Love and hate, sympathy and malevolence are equally capable of expression. But the expression—the picture—is not equally beautiful. Still there may be an æsthetic pleasure and interest in the expression, the imitation, of evil passion,—of hate and revenge—of dreadful purpose bent on evil—of unscrupulous ambition,—as of what is morally lovely and approved. Only such a picture cannot stand by itself,—as an end in itself,—as a thing given up to exclusive contemplation. True art, for example, will give it its place in the drama, but its subordinate and controlled place.

But expression at its best is properly only the means of making visible to us, or incarnate, what is in itself beautiful, grand, or sublime. There is here no ultimate answer to the question as to wherein lies the nature of each of the objects which we so designate. In order to get to the root of æsthetical feeling, we must go back to psychological principles—the laws, in fact, under-

lying the whole theory of agreeable and disagreeable feelings — the theory of pleasure and pain. Under the form of pleasurable feeling, the æsthetical notion unquestionably comes; and if we are to understand its nature, we must look to the nature, the laws, the conditions of pleasurable feeling in general. The question is, in its special form, — What is the specific character of the æsthetical sentiment under the head of agreeable or pleasurable feeling?

Pleasure and pain as facts of experience are obviously not definable,—not even analysable;—deeper than these we cannot go in their line. We cannot state their nature or essence, so to speak, in abstract terms. They are simple facts, in the sense that they are not resolvable into more elementary facts. It would indeed be a curious effort of a "rational psychology" which would "deduce" pleasure and pain from any other phænomena or set of phænomena in consciousness, much more from any preconceived *a priori* formula. But we may be able to state the conditions and the circumstances in which they arise, and possibly find a law which uniformly regulates their occurrence. The law that regulates the existence—the rising in our consciousness—of pleasure

and pain, was long ago generalised by Aristotle; and it seems almost incredible that its bearing on ethics and æsthetics, on intellectual philosophy and on practical life, should not have been apprehended and applied during all those hundreds of years. It amounts to this, that pleasurable feeling is the reflex or accompaniment of the full, free, and unimpeded exercise of a faculty or capacity of mind; whereas pain is the result either of the repression of a power below its natural and legitimate degree of exercise, or of the straining of the power above its normal degree. Pain arises thus either from too little or from too much exertion; whereas pleasure is the sign of normal and natural exercise. In the case of vision, for example, we experience a feeling of pleasure when the light is such as to enable us to distinguish clearly the object which we seek to see. We experience a feeling of pain, on the other hand, when the light is too feeble; for then the eye is strained to unnatural or immoderate activity, seeking to discern the object. Or, it may be, the energy is repressed,—the full act of vision is not accomplished. We experience a similar disagreeable sensation when the light is too bright, for then the eye is dazzled and overpowered, and its outflow of natural activity is

repressed. The strain or the repression of any power is the cause equally of painful feeling.

In sensation the law holds in a marked way. The experience of moderate warmth is agreeable, but the sensation of heat increased beyond a certain degree becomes positively painful. So of odour, taste, and colour. The action of a moderately rough object may not be unpleasant, but intensify it and it becomes positively painful. Pleasure, on the other hand, arises when the effort is proportioned to the natural or acquired degree of the power which passes into action, and is the symbol of full, free, but unstrained activity. When we have forced inaction we have a disagreeable feeling of pain. When we sit for hours in a railway carriage, or in any confined position, we feel cramped and uncomfortable. And why? Simply because there is a restraint on our natural muscular and locomotive power. Long absence from friends, or from society,—the experience of continued solitude, — is unpleasant. And why? Because all our social powers and tendencies are thereby repressed, and thus languish.

I have no doubt that the Aristotelic law is applicable very generally, I should say almost universally, to our mental and our bodily life, and that it

is fitted to explain the facts connected with the phænomena of feeling. Whether and how far the principle requires modification and supplement is still a question. Perhaps it will be found that the modifications are not really departures from the universal law, but only adaptations of it in particular cases. In some cases of sensation there is doubtless something akin to a chemical action on the senses. An acid, for example, disintegrates the tissues; and even tastes and odours have some chemical effect. Still the essential nature of the action may be either in a stimulus or a repression of the nerves, or even in their alteration and destruction. And all these would fairly enough be considered in their results as cases of quantitative effect. It may be said, too, that non-complementary colours and sounds are disagreeable and inharmonious, not because they excite to too high or too low action of the sense, but because they excite opposite and non-fusible impressions. This, however, would be simply a case of the impeded effort of the mind to make one congenial or harmonious whole out of the two colours or notes. It would, in fact, be a case of impeded energy. A broken and irregular line arrests and impedes the motion of the eye in attempting to follow it—to make a

whole of it. We set out in one form or direction, and we are instantly confronted with a break. This is impeded activity, and a source of disagreeable feeling. If we meet first with red and then with orange in immediate succession or juxtaposition, we have a disagreeable feeling, because each energy of the sense is stimulated to the full, and this in the way of successive immediate demand. Yet red or orange, that is blue and yellow, may be set advantageously on the soft ground of green. We should never set red and blue, or blue and yellow, or red and yellow, in juxtaposition in a picture or dress; yet all these may appear together in the spring meadow or the summer bank, with its expanse of soothing green amid which they are placed.

This law accounts in a great measure for the variety in the æsthetical judgments and feelings of individuals. What may fully delight one taste will often not please another,—though the object itself may be fitted to give natural gratification. The grace of form which would appeal to the cultured sense might have no charm for the savage or illiterate; while gaudy colouring which might delight the savage would pall on the cultured man. In the former case, the susceptibility of appreciation,—the degree of faculty needed,—is too weak

or imperfect to give rise to the act of grasping or comprehension of the object; in the latter, the æsthetical power has been trained, variously developed, and educated in balance and moderation.

Action or energy is really at the root of feeling; and feeling is relative as a rule to the perfect or the imperfect energy—to the balance or equilibrium between disposable power and the act into which this power passes. Pleasure, in the first place, does not create activity; but activity, on the other hand, creates and produces pleasure. Once, however, the pleasure has been experienced, there is a tendency to renew the action; and the activity and pleasurable feeling act and react, the one and the other being mutually determining. Were we to cease to act, we should cease to feel, and in that case also we should cease to live—to be—for our life is realised only in action, and the highest life is but the highest action.

The Aristotelic principle applied to experience explains the facts of pleasure in connection with our intellectual and moral energies. All these are directed to certain ends; and where the end is realised—where the act is thus accomplished—the feeling of pleasure is the result. In Æsthetics the principle explains at once the pleasure we have in

the perception or apprehension of single forms and colours, and in the harmonious combination or synthesis of these—in a word, in composition. We also see how an enhanced feeling of pleasure arises, where the qualities—forms and colours—of the object are such as not only to excite single energies in themselves pleasurable, but, in their composition into a whole, to add the feeling which results from their relations to each other,—from subordination, proportion, fitness—in a word from variety in unity.

Perfection is sometimes laid down as the ultimate element in the beautiful, and as the most general. Such an expression is much too vague, —tells us little or nothing precisely. But perfection, read in the light of the Aristotelic law of energy, does tell us something. This would mean that each faculty — sensible, intellectual, imaginative, moral—has an object or end. Each energy of a power, or a power in exercise, is only perfected or completed as it reaches its end or object. Till then there is imperfection, a sense of want or unfitness. The eye must grasp the object on which it is directed—the ear the sound for which it waits—the intellect the object which it seeks to apprehend—the memory recall the past object it seeks. Each energy is then said to be

perfect or completed; and then only is there the satisfaction of the true pleasure which accompanies the energy. This has now reached its fulness. The pleasure is akin to the bloom which comes to crown the flower. In this sense, all beauty is relative to perfection,—all æsthetical gratification, like every other form, depends on the energy reaching its end or completeness. But all beauty is not simple perfection; even all æsthetical gratification is not this. We must further know the kind of object about which the perfect act is exercised, ere we can call it beautiful; and thus such a theory leaves out the solution of the point of the question.

We are too ready to suppose that the Senses act by themselves, independently of Imagination; and that it is through them alone that we receive the æsthetical emotions, especially the feeling of the Beautiful. This is not so; as has been said, "Imagination flows into every act of the senses,"—certainly Vision and Hearing. This holds true wherever complexity or variety of parts is presented to the senses. It is that function of Imagination which may be called the Representative or Pictorial. It keeps before the mind the point of a past perception, unites it with the succeeding present, and in the end gathers up the various impres-

sions into a unity or whole, accomplished or existing at a definite place and in a definite time.

This function may be exercised on single objects which are made up of a variety of parts, as a tree or plant. It is chiefly exercised, however, on a series or sum of real objects, on a scene or landscape of outward nature. Its highest development is the pictorial description or representation of the scenes of the outward world. And it is in the exercise of imagination of this kind that we first meet with and find the conditions of the properly æsthetical feelings—viz., those of Beauty, of the Picturesque, of Grandeur and Sublimity. The pleasure we have from single qualities is an approach to the æsthetical feeling; but it is not as yet that feeling truly developed.

It is thus quite obvious that the feeling of the Beautiful does not arise in the mind directly, as it were, from the object, as a sensation—a feeling of heat or cold—does from contact. Intermediate between the object existing and the æsthetical emotion there is the exercise of the Sense, of the Representative Imagination, and of the Judgment or faculty of relations,—that power which can apprehend proportion and symmetry, variety, subordination, and unity, and so form a completed or definite whole.

Referring, meanwhile, only to outward objects, or things in space, it is clear that the object which we call beautiful must be recognised as possessed of form, and form made up of a variety of parts. The absolutely monotonous or uniform does not excite æsthetical feeling, for it stimulates to no appreciable imaginative and intellectual energy. The surface of a table regarded simply as a repetition of the units of space is not beautiful, nor are the converging boards of a wooden floor. But if we look at the stately pine or the tapering birch, we experience a different emotion. In this we have uniformity, completeness; but the uniformity is and is constituted in and through the variety. It is dependent on the fact that the tree has a common centre, —the root and trunk on which branches, twigs, and leaves depend, with their accessories of greenery or other colour—of light and shadow—out of which they spring and radiate as from this common ground. This is the general character of tree and plant,—of organism in vegetation :—

"From the root
Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
More airy, last the bright consummate flow'r
Spirits odorous breathes."

We shall find the same principle exemplified in landscape which is illustrated in individual objects. We may have manifold individual objects before us,—background of hill-range, faintly blue against the heavens; expanse of valley below; winding of rushing river, with its wooded and broken banks. But in order to make a picture which shall be æsthetically pleasing, these must be so grouped and presented as to show a certain degree of wholeness or completeness in one representation; and this is realised only by the subordination of the variety to unity—that is, in this case, of seizing on the salient yet characteristic or essential feature of the scene; giving that emphasis, prominence, fixing the attention and interest on it, so that the contemplation of it shall in no way be distracted or broken by the intrusion of subordinate parts, however interesting these may be in themselves.

Neither the beauty of individual object nor of landscape is of course dependent merely on variations of form—on form alone—but form with its consenting and harmonious variations is the ground or framework on which the enhancing element of colour is outspread. And we find that colour, which is merely broken light, is effectively beautiful mainly according to its disposition and com-

bination—its harmonies and its contrasts. The law of uniformity and variety, or of variety in unity, is as applicable to the combinations of colour as it is to those of form, which they serve to render vivid and emphatic.

In landscape we have besides to consider not only colour, but light and shadow, transparency, and perspective or the power of distance. These, however, affect rather the art of the painter than that of the literary artist. The former can give them directly, the latter has to work on them mainly through hints and suggestions to the cultured imagination.

The feeling of the Beautiful properly so called may thus be said to arise from the combination of the various features of an object, in such a relation of harmony as to constitute that unity in variety known as a completed whole. It is directly the accompaniment of that threefold energy of Sense, Imagination, and Judgment, which partly recognises and partly constitutes such an object for the mind.

This appears to me to be the most general formula of the Beautiful which we possess. There are doubtless cases of æsthetical pleasure to which it does not markedly apply. But these cases may

be shown to come under the Aristotelic law of pleasure in its special applications.

The formula does not adequately express the nature of the beautiful in the single or isolated, especially the impressions and perceptions of the senses—to say nothing of moral and spiritual impulses, which rise superior to mere formal obligation. There are colours, sounds,—shades, degrees, tints of colours,—kinds, tones, modulations of sounds, which we commonly pronounce beautiful, though taken by themselves and apart from combination. There is expanse of light, degree of brightness, purity of cloud and sky, gleam of snow, in which we rejoice as full of æsthetical delight; yet clearly the mere unity in variety in such objects either does not exist at all, or even where it can be strainedly supposed to be, does not afford the true explanation. It does not, in fact, belong more to those objects than to others which give us no agreeable feeling whatever. But frequently where it is not the original source of pleasure, it is yet the secondary and enhancing one. The delight we feel in the expanse of moorland, when it glows with the purple heather, in the soft light of the August afternoon, arises in the main directly from the mass of colour which it continuously spreads

before the eye; and this is to be explained by the power of the object to stimulate and yet soothe the sense. At the same time, even this delight is helped by the repetition of clump after clump, over an indefinite expanse, as far as eye can follow: the varied forms and the wavy masses, outlined in curves, each repeating for us the same glow of radiant purple. If the principle thus of uniformity in variety does not explain the original delight in such a case, it yet gives the reason why the pleasure is so largely enhanced, and why we have a more liberal and abounding joy in the glory of the moorland than in the single clump at our feet.

But there can be no doubt of the appplication of the principle of unity in variety to cases of even moderate complexity, and it is eminently applicable to the higher forms of pictorial art, especially landscape. In regard even to expanse of surface, as a plain or moorland covered with newly fallen snow, there is, in addition to the sense of brightness and purity, the continuity, the outspreading of the surface, with the same lustre repeated over the many different points to the vision. The same is true of the brightness of the blue spread on the heaven overhead, into which also enters the variety of the concave form, knit together and concen-

trated. The rapid successive break of the burn over the stones or the craggy falls gives us a pleasure from its gleam and its purity, but also from the quick repetition of wavelet and sparkle all held together in the unity of its flow. There is motion always varying, yet restrained within a unity of limit.

In regard to line and form, unity in variety is especially remarkable, and it gives rise to the æsthetic feeling the moment the variety rises beyond a certain degree, and very much in proportion to the increase of the degree, until the maximum limit of representation is reached. We must have no monotony on the one hand, and no perplexity on the other.

In the straight line there is the repetition of the unit of perception—of the *minimum visibile*—but this with so little variety, with so much precisely of the same addition, that there is no æsthetical pleasure. Nor is this feeling generated by the line being constituted into a plane surface, as in a table or a floor. There is variety here, but it lacks degree sufficient to stimulate. The line of curve approaches a higher degree of variety, and it gives the impression of knitting, and therefore of strength. It touches the expression of the invisible. The

circle is too monotonous to yield by itself æsthetical pleasure, at least in any marked degree.

In the perception of form there is a certain following of point after point, then line after line, by the eye. That line is thus agreeable which excites the percipient energy moderately, and so far harmoniously. It has been remarked that the movement of the eye along a horizontal line requires less energy than following a vertical one. It is thus more commonly agreeable. A broken, jagged, and irregular line is a source of crossing and constantly impeded energies. It is thus displeasing. The curve is varied yet continuous, and therefore agreeable.*

It is, however, in the combination of lines that the principle of unity in variety emphatically appears. Take any of the striking valleys in the Lowlands of Scotland—take that of Manor Water, for example, and pause for a little on its charm. On right and left of you, looking upwards—and you ought always to look up a valley to feel its power—is hill corresponding to hill, each flowing down on its own side in graceful sinuous curve to the haughs which bound the stream and between which it hastens and gleams. Each curve flowing from north to south and from south to north rises

* Cf. Rabier, *Psychologie*, p. 637.

in graceful proportion higher than the nearer one, until the valley is enfolded in a long and continuous embrace of wavy hills. Pass upwards for some miles, and the mass of hill grows larger and grander, yet the corresponding sloping well-proportioned curve of each side of the valley is preserved. At length the eye is carried away into the passing mist on Dollar Law, and there opens before you the deep green and enclosed urn that holds the springs of the Manor, bounded against the western sky still by the sinuous hill line, beyond which the eye can see nought but the grey cloud or the clear break of heaven gleaming downwards into the shadowed depth. All this has its wonderful accessories of light and shadow—of green and purple colouring, of sparkle of the stream, of broad-leaved ancient sycamore or slender birch, and there is peace, pathos, and solitude; but the framework of the whole is the gracious proportion and harmony of hill folding, —the interlacing of line with line—delicate as from the hand of an unseen sculptor. It is this kind of framework which we can detect in Van Eyck, and in the master of mountain grace—the Shakespeare of Art, Turner. Witness the latter's "Alps from Turin," and his "Hills above Florence." *

* See the engravings in Gilbert, *Landscape in Art*, pp. 56-60.

But while we speak of ends in things, and of the end in the useful, as not being within the true scope of art or determining the beautiful, we must notice that there is another kind of end which is truly, purely, characteristically artistic—that is, the end which a thing is to itself or its type. This — provided always the condition of complexity, of unity in variety, be fulfilled—is the true object of the sentiment of the beautiful in nature; to realise it, in words, forms, or colours, is the true aim of art. An object of vision, to be an object for us at all, must be completed or bounded in space; it must have definite figure and size; it must appear within terminal lines. Thus the complex object has parts—lines, forms, colours; these depend on a centre—a principle of radiation, as it were. A centre implies subordination and proportion, relative position and mutually adjusted length and breadth. All these facts must be taken up in one view, in one perception and representation, so that they may make one object, one definite, completed whole. This is so in the human form; it is so in sculptured representation of it; it is so in plant and in tree. In each of these classes of objects there is a type—an ideal, in fact, which we have learned from experience, no doubt, but it

matters little how. When the individual object has such complexity in unity—such variety subordinated, proportioned relatively to the type, as to realise it in itself—it has reached its end, its proper nature, its true being, so far its perfection. It is now an end in itself, has a certain internal completeness and harmony which leads us to rest in it, to desire nothing more in this respect; in a word, it is perfect, it is beautiful. In this sense Beauty is the realisation and the contemplation of ends in things.

But it does not follow that the fulfilment of the type in every case gives rise to the beautiful. There are types so simple—there are even types so unconformed to what an ideal reason might desire or seek—that the embodiment of them cannot be regarded as beautiful. The individual may be perfect as realising its type, yet not in any way pleasing or beautiful. What we need in every case of the purely beautiful is that higher degree or complexity of qualities which gives a surplus, as it were, over and above the mere fulfilment of type. In fact, we come back to the fruitful formula of variety in unity; and we must keep in mind also in this connection that the single lines or features of an object must be each in itself a source of gratification, though not necessarily

of an intense kind, ere the sum of them, or the gathering these up into a whole, can afford the feeling of the Beautiful.

But the æsthetical feeling has other forms besides that of the Beautiful — forms yet seen to be grounded on a modification of the principle at the root of Beauty itself. If the variety in the object be such that we cannot represent it as one, but are led to fix our attention in succession on the parts, or to regard it as short of the whole type or class to which we would naturally refer it,—we have the feeling, not of the beautiful, but of the Picturesque. In the beautiful, unity and variety are evenly balanced; in the picturesque there is a certain disproportion between these elements—the unity is sacrificed to the variety. While the tree in the fulness and proportion of its symmetry is a beautiful object, the pollarded willow of the English meadow and the Dutch canal is merely picturesque. It suggests a type, but it is itself a broken and imperfect embodiment of the type. The imagination seeks to make a whole of the object, but it fails. We feel that the object ought to be complete. We know wherein its completeness would consist; but it does not fulfil the type. The mind still gathers pleasure from it; looks at it in its details; is con-

tent to rest in these; is satisfied with the pleasure which its broken and imperfect unity affords. The pleasure of the picturesque is thus the pleasure which springs from the variety of features as parts of an object, and our being content to go over these in succession without any attempt to grasp them as a whole: the pleasure of the beautiful, on the other hand, springs from the representation of these as a unity or whole. When we watch with interest one light fleecy cloud follow another in rapid succession across the sky on a bright summer day, or when we note the flickering play of light and shade beneath the leaves of the summer wood, we experience the feeling of the picturesque. We are soothed and pleased with the variety, the novelty, the motion and change. The bright blue, stainless, yet variously tinged concave of heaven, as it is outstretched from horizon to horizon in the fulness of its perfect and completed symmetry, gives rise to the emotion of the beautiful,—of the beautiful, indeed, as it touches the sublime. The soul of the picturesque is the novelty of variety; the power of the beautiful lies in abiding, accomplished development. The spirit of the one is restless,—ever pressing on in the search after novelty and fresh detail; the other arrests and holds us still by its

inherent charms. Philosophically as well as poetically, "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever." The picturesque for a time charms the Fancy; the beautiful is the permanent object of the pure Imagination.

The Picturesque with its brokenness and imperfection belongs eminently to the class of æsthetical objects whose influence is enhanced by expression and suggestion. It is especially the power of time, of ruin, and decay; it suggests what has been of completeness and perfection against what is now of fragment and insufficiency,—the strength that once was against the feebleness of decay,—the life and the joy, it may be, that once had their voices in the now deserted hall. The picturesque thus derives a new power from the shadows of memory, and the regrets that cling to the story of the past. The picturesque rises above its mere sensuous imperfection to the high, pure, and ennobling power of pathos.

But there is still another grand form of the æsthetical emotion. There may be an object of outward nature which is sufficient to occupy and fill the imaginative energy, and at the same time to transcend its compass or embrace. Imagination in its representative function is stretched

to the utmost of its available power, but the object as a whole or in its completeness escapes it. In this case we have a wholly peculiar æsthetical feeling—viz., that of the Sublime. There is, as the ground or element of the sublime, the full, free outflow of imaginative power; but it is impeded and baffled, for it does not completely image the object on which it pours its strength. There is always the consciousness that there is still something higher in the present experience than it has grasped — an outstretching, — something before, something higher, stronger, which is still there in its transcendent power. The feeling which arises in these circumstances is one full and strong—hence so far pleasurable,—at the same time, as ultimately baffled and impeded, partly painful—subdued and reverential it may be, awed under that which, while it confronts imagination and thought, actually transcends both. This emotion may be experienced in regard to Power, to Time, to Space. Power is shown in various forms—power great and strong, yet transcendent; there fronting us, yet above us or surrounding us,—mightier, wider, stronger than ourselves. The sweep of ocean in storm, the mighty cataract, the rushing river, all tell of the intensity of transcendent power—power that fills

all the sense and all the imagination, that transcends these wholly, and baffles even the thought to grasp it in its totality,—to measure or complete the conception of it.

"Simplicity and variety," says Gilpin, "are the acknowledged foundations of all picturesque effect. Either of them will produce it, but it generally takes its tone from one. When the landscape approaches nearer simplicity, it approaches nearer the sublime; and when variety prevails, it tends more to the beautiful. A vast range of mountains, the lines of which are simple, and the surfaces broad, grand, and extensive, is rather sublime than beautiful. Add trees upon the foreground, tufted woods creeping up the sides of the hills, a castle upon some knoll, and skiffs upon the lake (if there be one), and though the landscape will still be sublime, yet with these additions (if they are happily introduced) the beautiful will predominate. This is exactly the case of the Scotch views. The addition of such furniture would give them beauty. At present unadorned grandeur is their characteristic, and the production of sublime ideas the effect." *

In this passage Gilpin has come very near the

* Gilpin, *Picturesque Beauty*, vol. ii. p. 122.

full and precise distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. The essence of the former is the variety of parts or features, yet run up to unity—to a whole of spontaneous vision and representation; the essence of the latter is simplicity, a certain oneness of feature or character,—be it height, or mass, or force, or time, or space, or a union of magnitude and power, which stimulates and fills, yet overpasses the strongest imaginative effort completely to grasp it.

There is the sublime of Time. When we try to represent time — to embody it in successive imaginative forms, however great, vast, or long— we always find a time beyond,—a transcendent time. Every attempt to realise time as a whole is baffled, and each effort but results in realising more and more the limitlessness of Eternity. This is the Sublime of Duration.

With this element we naturally connect the effects of Power — of the great limitless forces which have been at work during the past ages; at work in making and constituting, in modifying, changing, and destroying. And these conceptions of the march of irresistible Power, the passing, fading away of individuals before it, its unceasing ongoing, its indifference, and in some respects

its mercilessness—fill, rouse, and appal imagination and thought, and thus produce the mixed emotion of sublimity,—the sublimity of omnipotence joined to limitlessness. In this there is the element of suggestion of what is beyond the senses, in its highest, strongest form.

But there is also the sublime of Space. Here, too, we find that imagination is roused, transcended, and baffled. The *here* is but a small part of knowledge. There is a sphere of space, and therefore of possible being beyond it; and let us stretch the circle of our expanse as widely as we may—out beyond this world, out into the stellar spaces, out beyond these into regions remote and indefinite—still there is an ever-widening expanse of space, the place of possible existence. This we cannot but think to be, yet grasp or complete it we cannot. Imagination and thought are excited to the utmost effort, but fail of completeness; and we have thus the mixed and thrilling feeling of the sublime of boundless expanse,—a feeling characterised by a stern pleasure, an emotion far removed from mere gratification—the nearest approach to dread, reverence, and awe. And here, too, the element of power comes into fusion with the limitlessness of space; for we connect the great physi-

cal laws—the far-reaching elemental forces—with those objects which occupy the space we know, and imagine to occupy the space we do not know, and try to realise the links which bind together earth and heaven, and hold planets and stars firmly grasped in their well-ordered round.

I have spoken hitherto of the æsthetical emotions as connected with actually existing outward objects; but these may be, of course, excited by the combination of images, ideas, conceptions, which are simply floating in and passing through the mind. We may allow these to come and go, to arrange themselves according to their affinities and contrasts into new, grotesque, even pathetic forms. We may give ourselves up to fancy, or we may seek by a true imaginative effort to combine them, according to the proper laws of the faculty, and thus create, as it were, new forms or syntheses of qualities never found united in experience. We may thus eliminate imperfections from the actual, and get nearer the true types of things. Or we may gather together congruous elements, and so raise out of the commonplace and familiar, new, striking, wondrous wholes of beauty, symmetry, and proportion, never before observed or conceived. This is Idealising Imagination. In this

form it can body forth consummate ideals of beauty, truth, loveliness, and purity. It can give

"more pellucid streams,
An ampler ether, a diviner air,
And fields invested with purpureal gleams;
Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day
Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey."

Finally, there is still another form of Imagination, and that is the Symbolical. This is that power of insight into the world of outward nature, which sees in things the expression of intellectual, moral, and spiritual qualities; fuses, so to speak, the unconscious life of nature and the conscious life of man in the unity of feeling, communion, sympathy. It is not merely a process of impersonation under excited emotion. It is the power, under the influence of love and holy passion, of "seeing into the life of things." It is this symbolical Power alone which can fuse the dualism of Man and Nature. For speculative thought this opposition must always subsist; for the Symbolical Imagination there is a common life in the two great spheres of Humanity and the World; and finally, even a community of life and thought, with the Power which transcends all, yet lives in all.

All that need be said at present regarding those two forms of imagination—the Idealising and the Symbolical—is, that they are essentially regulated so far as creation and combination are concerned—so far, in fact, as the artistic element is involved—by the laws already indicated of the Representative Power.

This form of Imagination—the Symbolical—is the power of reading the expression of things; it is especially the æsthetical or imaginative interpretation of nature. This is not dependent on accidental associations, not on the contingencies of one individual experience,—not even on the general constitutive laws of association. It refers to an intrinsic connection of outward objects with mental or spiritual qualities. It is probable, I think, that every object which fulfils the representative conditions of the beautiful, suggests intellectual, moral, and spiritual action,—reflects it as something that has come from a higher sphere upon it. Many single qualities, or objects of æsthetical interest to us, have this significative or suggestive power. Thus, as has been remarked, the horizontal line suggests calm, repose, and rest, while the curved line is significant of action and movement. The concave form encloses and embraces, seems to

guard and shelter, like the great heaven or the cathedral roof; while the convex presents to us an exterior which is repellent. The vertical line represents aspiration — possibly ambition.* Colours and sounds are equally significant and representative, whether taken singly or in combination. What is known as the grace of form and movement is inseparably connected with the conceptions of ease, mastery, freedom,—free power held in restraint, and voluntarily manifested.

The suggestiveness of line may be noticed in the course of the Lowland burn. There is a prevailing curvature. The stream scoops out the foot of the brae, rounds it into a crescent, sweeps and wheels to the opposite side,—leaving for a space a tolerably straight line to succeed the curve which it has formed. This process is repeated on the opposite bank, and goes on in pretty constant alternation, until the parallelism of conformity and variety is worked out. And thus we have the gracefully varied course, irregular yet regular in its variations,—and the burn itself speeds and gleams in its apparently never-ending "links." This in itself is a graceful form, in singular contrast to the stiffness, hardness, and ridigity of the

* Cf. Rabier, *Psychologie*, p. 641.

newly-cut ditch, or the banked and useful canal. There is in it the soul of liberty. We feel that the grace has been wrought by the free hand of nature, — by the spirit almost of the stream, which cares not to follow the shortest route, rather moves as if it would play and disport itself for joy, never resting, yet tarrying amid the greenery of the grassy knowes, the bracken, and the heather, which company it by the way.

It is late Autumn, and you are well up one of our burns. You have behind you the hill rising to a sky-line which you do not catch, and in front of you a corresponding height beyond the highest line of which the blue sky peers, and clouds pass across its face. A mile more will perhaps take you to the spring whence the burn first issues to the light. Here where you stand it breaks into a fall, and rests and whirls in a linn-pool; and on the side opposite to you is a grey, erect, broken, and lichen-tinted rock, whose crown and sides are grasped by a solitary rowan-tree. This hangs over the linn-pool sounding aye in a soft unrest; its berries are red, and its leaves, gently fluttering, are a pale golden. Behind and around it, the eye notes and is carried up the slope of the hill, and on it there are masses of deep red-brown bracken,

interspaced with patches and lines of short mountain grass, emerald green, velvet-like in pile and tone; and there are also breaks of heather,—a clump here and there,—and then a larger expanse. The sprigs are subsiding into russet; and the bloom is no longer the rich purple it was, but shows as if the virtue were out of it, and the rains had tarnished and bleached it. Decay but not death is on it, as on the rowan and the bracken; and all is fading in harmony,—the russet look is the prevailing one: only the green of the grass reminds you of the summer life that is fast passing; and the bright red of the rowan-berries is the redeeming flash of joy in the scene. Withal, the one feeling in the heart is that of the passing of the days,—the summer joy gone,—the life, the brightness decayed and failing; and this one feeling is raised and intensified by the peculiar cast of colouring which each object appropriately wears, varied and yet suffusing in one common blending. The monotone of the stream at your feet but supplies the touch of pathetic sound.

Pathos—that soul-subduing feeling which stills the heart, which has in it a tinge of melancholy not unpleasing—arises most frequently from the sense of contrast. It arises to the lonely

traveller on the moor, amid the wide-spreading solitudes and beneath the far-stretching grey sky. Somehow this is based on the littleness, the helplessness, of self amid the indefiniteness, the infinity even, which is felt to be surrounding. Most generally there is a reference to human life, human energy, human story,—to man's work,—to the broken, dilapidated, or decaying traces of the hands and the footsteps of man. The solitary, roofless, abandoned tower in the glen by the burnside,—stalwart man and sunny-faced child no longer there,—the fire extinct on its cold and blackened hearth; the single sycamore standing on the green hillside, and still spreading its leafy boughs over the ground walls of the homestead "in vain and vacant shade,"—these suggest the passingness of man's work in face of the unsparing tread of the power of nature, tending constantly to reassert its supremacy over human energy, and its everlastingness in contrast to the passing hour of human life and interest.

There is the same strange and stirring feeling even when nature destroys or impairs part of its own work, or leaves but a fragment of a great whole to tell of the past,—to suggest pictures of what has been, and of all the energetic life that

was there through the ages. It is thus that we are stirred by the sight of the last solitary birk or the decaying thorn,—which has long outlived "his green compeers,"—on the hillside in the Forest of Ettrick.

> "Yon lonely Thorn, would he could tell
> The changes of his parent dell,
> Since he, so grey and stubborn now,
> Waved in each breeze a sapling bough." *

The beauty, the grace even, of flower and plant,—the more exquisite they are, the closer the suggestion of coming change and decay. These are so intensely felt and enjoyed,—being the best and the brightest,—that we feel and fear they cannot last. Our emotion in their presence is so stretched, that it verges on the dread of finish having reached speedy passing away. We know well that the highest in the perfection of the thing is the point whence it reaches decay and dissolution.

It is not always the clear, the bright, and the definite which has the greatest power of suggestion and imaginative impression. The grey dawn—"the greyking of the day" of the older

* *Marmion*, canto ii., Int.

Scottish poets—subdues us more than the bright noon; the gloamin', with all its accessories of surrounding and oncoming indefinite shapes and mysterious suggestions; the grey dim-lit sky over the long wavy hills of a summer midnight; and the weather-gleam—that clear belt of light that runs along the hill-tops, with the dark heaven above and the dark hills below,—a highway of the spirit-land that encompasses the solitudes of earth: all these impress us with peculiar power, and symbolise for us that mysterious world which is said to lie within the sphere of imagination, but which awes and elevates and purifies the soul that feels it, far more than the most definitely outlined things of earth.

The man who first fully found this symbolism in nature was unquestionably Wordsworth. Of it there are but faint traces in Scottish poetry up to his time, or for that matter in English poetry itself. But Wordsworth has read in things not only the symbolism which links them to the human mind; he has also found that symbolism which leads on to the one great living Spirit who, while He transcends the world of experience, is yet in it,—manifesting Himself in all—in light and darkness, sunshine and gloom, holding the balance

of opposites in the hollow of his hand—not a magnified man, but a soul, which somehow takes up into one both man and nature:—

"Even as one essence of pervading light
Shines in the brightest of ten thousand stars,
And the weak worm that feeds her lonely lamp,
Couched in the dewy grass." *

"Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light,—
Were all like workings of one Mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end." †

When we run back expression in act to its last ground, we must come to the nature of the quality which it expresses, and find in it the source at least of our ultimate pleasure or satisfaction in the work. The character of the expression—its aim or suitableness, fitness, propriety, and grace—is no doubt a most important æsthetical element,—in fact, the primary one. But if I am asked why I admire the portraiture of self-sacrifice, of heroism, of bravery, of benevolence, of love, more than of

* *Prelude*, p. 295. † *Prelude*, Moxon's ed., b. vi. p. 132.

selfishnesss, self-seeking, cowardice, hardness of heart, and hate, I can only refer to the fundamental moral distinctions and to their grounds. If asked why I can contemplate even with gratification the portraiture of the baser and repulsive passions, I can only point to the fact that these are possibilities of human character, and I desire to see man at his worst as well as his best, as I may also wish to see perfect expression of such emotions; only this is likely to be my further feeling and desire—to find all such portraiture of evil subordinated somehow, as Shakespeare constantly subordinates it, to its fitting destiny and retribution. This is still within the bounds, and to the satisfaction, of the moral nature and feeling of mankind.

If I were asked to state the specific difference of the æsthetical among the agreeable feelings of our nature, I should say that they are satisfied with the internal ends of things—with their objects as they are in themselves. I should certainly, however, object to the statement that the æsthetical feelings delight merely in their own activity, or in the mere play of the energies of Sense, Imagination, and Judgment, which they accompany. This is only partially true. In play, in the dance, in the

chase, we seek simply for the activity which they give us and its accompanying pleasure and excitement. They are pursued for the love of the action appropriate to them, for the pleasure which it brings. The Beautiful is so far sought in the same way. It is sought because of the free play of the faculties which it stimulates. It has no end outside of the object itself. But there is this difference, that the feeling of the beautiful depends on a very complex intellectual and imaginative activity; that it looks to what is best, highest, purest in form; that it is the ally and the help of disinterested regard; that it gives a refinement, and delicacy of feeling, and a tone of culture to be acquired in no other sphere; that there is in it, in its higher forms, an open vision for the meaning of the world, and of its relations to Man and God, to be realised in no other sphere. Indifferent to fact or reality it no doubt is. It need not care whether the object really exists or is a formation of the Imagination, provided only it fulfils the rules of the æsthetical creation. All the same, it finds its primary nourishment in the beauty of the world of reality; it seeks its true ideal in the things of this world sublimated and elevated to a higher type; and though it may be abused, left merely to feed

on itself, and so minister to a base and effeminate luxury, it is, in its legitimate sphere, one of the most powerful agents of civilisation and culture, and of that higher consciousness in man which raises him above low aims, selfish ends,—all the meannesses of a material and worldly life.

The feeling of the Beautiful arises, thus, without reference to end out of or apart from the thing itself. This reference as a rule kills the beautiful. The pleasure we feel in vision may arise from the mere contemplation of light or colour. Then we have the æsthetical pleasure. It is enough for us that the object fills and arrests the sense. If we treat the light or the colour as a sign of something beyond itself,—as an indication, say, of coming storm, as a token or signification of something that has happened,—we pass at once out of the æsthetical sphere, and our interest is fixed not on the object but on that which it introduces to the mind. The voice which announces to us the death of a friend, or some disaster local or national, may have the sweetest tones. This element would for the time escape us, and we should think only of that which it signified. The sentinel whose ear is open to every the softest and sweetest sound of the summer night, would as a rule be more intent on what it

boded of approaching danger than of what it might be in itself. Circumstances thus modify greatly our actual appreciation of the beautiful, especially in nature. The circumstances of some lives so occupy and abstract them, that they seldom or never pause on the purely beautiful at all. Aristotle has taught us that pleasures of opposite and non-congenial activities, if sought to be experienced in one time, not only cannot be conjoined, but actually conflict with and destroy each other. And this principle has a very special application to æsthetical feeling and its anomalies. It explains, more than anything else, the differences in the moods of the same individual at different times. What is felt to be beautiful at one time is passed by with indifference or disgust at another. Looking out in ordinary health and vigour of a morning on the sunshine that flashes on the hills or floods the valley, we naturally and normally rejoice in the mere glory of the sight. But what attraction would this have for us, if our heart were filled with a sense of bereavement of one near and dear to us? Instead of enjoyment, we should feel it to be a repugnance, and a mockery of our emotion.

And this principle may explain the cast of national feeling as well, even when subsisting through

long periods of time. It may explain how a people may cherish a repugnance to what is in itself grand and sublime—to depth of forest, and height and mass and solitude of mountain; for if these are objects of fear or dread, either through superstition, or wild beast, or tracklessness, or storm, or lurking foe,—this mood will repress all æsthetical emotion, all delight in them for their own sakes, so long as the repellent feeling continues. Of this we could easily cite examples in Greek, in Roman, and in Scottish history and poetry.

Under the Aristotelic law apparent anomalies disappear, and discrepant facts are reconciled. Thus in regard to the same energy of mind there may be both the pleasure appropriate to the act itself and the æsthetical gratification. What is useful is fitted to its end. The means may be complex, well arranged, well proportioned, well adapted for its work—as in the case of a composite piece of machinery. We may have pleasure in contemplating the utility of the end which it is fitted to accomplish; we may have pleasure not less in taking in the complexity of the structure, and in noting its exact fitness for the end. There may even be the suggestion of the ingenuity which mind has manifested in the con-

struction. The experience of any one of the gratifications so arising, depends entirely on the abstracting power and habit of mind of the spectator.

So it is with intellectual order—arrangement, demonstration. Our interest may be in the conclusion and its importance—this is not necessarily æsthetical; or it may be in the demonstration—the well-ordered array of proof—the knitting together of propositions and conclusion—the stately march and power of argument. The energy through which we reach the conclusion is the source of gratification; for order, arrangement, lucidity, and force in the process stimulate and please the intellectual faculty; and the mind which rests on these—grasps and enjoys them — experiences æsthetical gratification. In the contemplation of the far-reaching laws and generalisations of science, under which the infinite variety, as it were, of the isolated and the individual is brought under the unity of conception,—the chaos of things subdued by the central authority and the power of thought, — we may have æsthetical delight, from the simple view of the regulating law and dominating idea, with all its countless ramifications through the world of fact. This is the æsthetical side, and imagination and poetry itself are

thus inseparable from every lofty scientific generalisation. Our admiration also will necessarily go out to the mind which showed its power in the discovery, to that form of genius which rises beyond even the "flammantia mœnia mundi." All this is purely æsthetical, and apart wholly from practical applications and uses. It is dependent on the play of our faculties and a simple disinterested regard.

And so in the contemplation of moral action of the heroic kind, whether in the duties of humble life or on a grand national scale. There is the moral approval, the sympathy with the actor and his dutiful and noble deed — with, it may be, patient endurance, self-restraint, self-sacrifice, courage and daring in difficulty and danger. Such acts and motives have a special stimulus for the powers alike of intellect and imagination. They have an especial fitness to their ends, and thus to the great moral needs of life and the world. They are the manifestation of power — intense, continuous, strongly tried; they show concentration and elevation of character. They raise the spectator above himself and his own littlenesses, and show him the ideal in fact. The very contemplation of them is intensely stimulating and pleasing. And thus, in the very act in which we accord

our moral approval and our sympathy, we experience the pleasure of energy; and the æsthetical gratification is bound up with the moral admiration. It is especially the function of dramatic art to exhibit this side of human experience and character. To win acceptance, it emphasises the form of the action—all that contributes to the free, unimpeded play of our imaginative energies. The reality of the action, if it actually took place before us, would leave little room for the mere æsthetical pleasure; we should be too absorbed in its ongoing, its success, and its issue—in the actual suffering and the actual daring. But representation gives us the essence of the act in the most fitting form, and we now admire or love or pity, dislike, despise, or fear—are filled with reverence, awe, or sympathy, as the spectacular movement develops its ideal without conscious interference of the real. And the character of the representation as expressive—well and significantly expressive of that which it professes to exhibit—is to us in the æsthetic mood truly the main source of our gratification. For this is itself a stimulus of imagination to compare it with the real, and the sense of the fitness in the means is itself a source of æsthetical pleasure. We learn through imita-

tion, and we find the distant action presented to us without its reality, yet as if it were real. There is the exposition of what has been or as if it had been. This abstraction from the real, this concentration on the purely representative spectacle, is capable of yielding a high, pure, and refining culture. At the same time, it readily admits of abuse,—of a mere absorption in the representation, its charms, its details, and its fitness—the excitement of the varying alternation of incidents, and the consummation of these in a fitting issue or *dénouement*. Thus it is that dramatic representation may be perverted; and the man who weeps at distress on the stage may pass it by on the street, and he who in his heart denounces the villain of the play may sometimes act the part in sober reality. This I do not adduce in disparagement of this form of art. All the same, when the æsthetical and the moral come into a sort of rivalry, there is this kind of danger to be guarded against. But the abuse of the pleasure of the high ideal—the vulgar sinking it in the pleasure of Sentiment—is no reason why the best souls should not have this ideal, live in it for a time, and so purify and elevate their conceptions of the actual.

THE FEELING FOR NATURE IN SCOTTISH POETRY.

CHAPTER III.

SCOTTISH POETRY OF NATURE—GENERAL HISTORICAL SURVEY.

We need to keep the principles now stated in mind, in order to understand the course of Scottish poetry. But at the same time there are external modifying circumstances—the influences, for example, of classical authors—which demand, at least, a cursory notice.

The poets of Scotland in the earlier centuries were no doubt affected, in so far as they came under foreign influences, more by the classical writers of Greece and Rome—especially the latter—than by English authors. There is evidence, certainly, of

the power of Chaucer over James I., and even others—especially on William Dunbar; but this influence cannot be said to have been a predominating one. This is partly to be explained by the relations of hostility between England and Scotland in those centuries, and the infrequency and interruption of intercourse between the two countries. There was also, at least in the latter part of what may be called the Scottish classical period—especially in the time of Gawin Douglas—the growing divergence of the two branches of the original Teutonic language—that of the North and the South. Besides, it must be kept in mind that the great outburst of Scottish national poetry took place at a time when there was little corresponding development in England, and had virtually ceased ere Shakespeare or Milton had written a line. The foreign influence then which acted on the Scottish poets—and they were almost all of the upper and educated classes—was the literature of Greece and Rome. And this the Scotsman learned for the most part abroad. The Scottish student repaired to the University of Paris, to the Scots' College and the College of Montacute there, to receive the welcome which he by no means would have got at Oxford. His culture thus was classical,

not English. It was also for the same reason of the mediæval type in poetry and art, in so far as he became acquainted with these abroad. The influence of this training was manifest, as we shall find, on the language, the philosophy, and the poetry of Scotland.

I cannot here enter into a full discussion of the precise relation of the poets of ancient Greece and Rome to outward nature. Nor would this be relevant to the present purpose. Beginning with Homer, and going down the line of the Greeks to Theocritus, there are marked differences in the mood of each individual poet, yet a common line of resemblance. Homer, no doubt, has references to nature alike in its softer and its grander aspects; and it would be rash to say that he does not manifest an interest in these for their own sake. But he does not dwell on them simply as pictures, unless perhaps in the case of the moonlight scene and in some of the descriptions in the Odyssey. Homer looks at nature as it affects man—its power of sustaining life, its subserviency to our physical wants. Hence the side of nature which is lovingly regarded by him is not mountain, or rock, or wild sea—all fruitless and barren—but flat soft meadow-land, diversified, it may be, with tree and fountain,

filled with waving grass—good pasture-land for nourishing the useful ox, or cow, or sheep. Ploughed land, too, with its regular ridges and its recurring crops of golden grain, was felt as agreeable, because useful and desirable,—pleasing to the eye in its regularity, and also as fitted to supply the physical wants. Mr Ruskin has even said, in regard to the landscapes of the Odyssey, that each one intended to be beautiful is composed of "a fountain, a meadow, and a shady grove."

In Theocritus, in whom the Greek feeling for nature reached its highest point of close and loving observation, we do not go beyond the softer side. We have meadow, grove, and stream,—the galium and other flowers and herbs,—sunshine and shade, and all the accessories of the shepherd's life, faithfully noted, with a lingering affection for pure and simple nature. But the sense of grandeur, of mountain height, of the irregular or picturesque, is awanting. It did not come within the scope of the pastoral. Precisely the same characteristics are repeated in Allan Ramsay near our own day.

The poet who evidently influenced the Scottish writers most was, however, not Homer, or Theocritus, but Virgil. There is very slight trace of the influence of Lucretius so far as the point of

scenery is concerned, and there is very little of Horace. Ovid influenced them by his tales. The mediæval Scots show nothing of that sense of the limitless, — delight in the grander powers of nature — wind and storm-cloud, the sad joy of solitude,—which characterised Lucretius, the great nature-poet of antiquity. And no doubt, had they fully known Lucretius, they would have been repelled from him by their strong theistic sense, and the feeling of the supernatural which greatly influenced their imagination.

Virgil was the name held most in reverence among the Scottish poets of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. We have references to him, and evidence of his influence, long before Gawin Douglas translated the Æneid into the Scottish vernacular, and was thus the first to present it in rhythm in any modern language. There can be no doubt that in Virgil—the Eclogues, Georgics, and Æneid — there are ample and loving references to nature. Some of these are borrowed and modified by him, especially from Theocritus; but there is a sufficient remainder to show that he was a keen, loving, and faithful observer of the nature around him, and that he could render it with matchless grace and tender-

ness. Still the aspect of nature which Virgil loved was the soft and pastoral side of Italian scenery. In so far as he has depicted free nature, it is seen almost wholly from the human side, and in its relation to man's works, life, and action. He delighted in the scenes in the vale of his native Mincio. But he cannot be said to have shown a decided sympathy for the mountains, or the power of ocean. He manifests, indeed, something very like repugnance to both—though his reference to Father Apennine, with his holm-oaks and his snow-white summit in the sky, may show, as Principal Shairp remarks, as if "the power of hills" had been for a moment on him.*

Poets to whom Virgil was a model had an excellent example of purity, force, and suggestiveness of diction, and beauty of picturing; but the scope of the art was limited in subject. They could not thus be led to touch with sympathy on the irregularity of the Scottish landscape, the heights and howes, for example, of the Border counties,—the wild solitary moorland, with its heather, its grey rock, and its bracken, so dear to the heart of Scott, that he passionately exclaimed to Washington Irving, "I like the look of those honest grey hills,

* *Poetic Interpretation of Nature*, p. 147.

and if I did not see the heather-bloom once a-year, I think I should die." Hence, too, it happened, among other reasons no doubt, that in the great middle period of Scottish poetry we find the classical and mediæval style of feeling and art predominant, with many of its virtues and not a few of its defects—among others this, that in a country where rock and mountain abound, where the stern side of nature is the characteristic one, there was nevertheless literally no poetic sense of it, or sympathy with it.

The classical training of our early Scottish poets led to a certain habit of unreality in dealing with the objects of nature. I refer especially to the constant introduction of sun and moon, stars, seasons, winds, under their classical names—Phœbus, Cynthia, Ver, Boreas, Eolus, and so on. While with the classical poets this nomenclature was grounded on a certain reality of feeling, and even a certain belief in transcendent divine powers, with our poets it had no such significance. There was neither deep feeling, giving rise to impersonation, nor, under a popular theism such as subsisted in Scotland, was there religious belief sufficient to warrant such an apotheosis of the powers of nature. It was, in short, simply an insipid traditionalism.

There is, no doubt, some sort of freshness—at least, a less hackneyed traditionalism — in the use of these classical terms in our early Scottish writers, such as Dunbar and Douglas, because the words and ideas, if there were any, were by them borrowed for the first time. And we can excuse people who lived in a barbarous age, as I am afraid nearly all our Scottish ages were, for showing that they knew something of the classic poets and Literæ Humaniores—that, in a word, they had not gone to school and college for nothing. But, at the best, it was a most unfortunate habit, which for a long time veiled the real aspects of nature; and, in the last century, the legacy of affectation which thus came down to us, gave rise to a mode of writing the most meaningless, heartless, and insipid in our literature.

Those of the Scottish poets, too, of this time, who went abroad and got a tincture in their youth of the mediæval poetry and art, were not likely thus to be advanced in the feeling for Scottish landscape more than by Virgil. In that mediæval time, man is still the centre from which outward nature is looked at, and the sense of order as at the root of the beautiful, has increased. The characteristic middle-age landscape is a moated

castle, with fences, trimmed gardens, well-clipt hedgerows, lines of trees. This is the embodiment of defence, of safety, and social importance. And there was a pleasure in certain artificial aspects of nature,—in the regular gardens around the castle, the orchards, lawns, and the stately trees. And amid these there were, no doubt, some natural things which could not be improved even by art,—there was the bloom of the flowers, there was the song of the birds. The more cultured feeling of the time thus found its nourishment. There is proof, at least, in Scottish poetry, that it was chiefly through sympathy with the notes of the woodland birds — this one purely natural thing which art could not fetter or clip—that our modern lyric song took its rise and outburst.

Now I do not mean at all to say that this mediæval feeling of art, limited and narrow as it was, was not an exceedingly good thing in its time. It is good to have any feeling for nature which is refining, unselfish, ennobling. It was good to feel the power of well-arranged things—trim gardens and quaintly designed parterres. It was especially well, when the feeling rose to its climax in the admiration of the graceful and well-appointed human form, the accomplished and decorated

knight, mottled with leaf and flower, and brilliant in blue and gold, with perhaps the sable heads dashed dark on the silver shield. Out of this feeling transmitted to us has come much of what is purest, best, most graceful in modern poetry—much of its symmetry, much of its strength; for we grow, in a measure, to what we are through the past, we being the heirs of the ages. But the accompanying sense of repugnance to the broken or decayed or irregular in things, the contempt for what had been destroyed in the siege and left as useless for defence,—people not as yet thinking that the growths which love decay would one day make it beautiful,—showed a painful narrowness and restraint. Yet time is even stronger and more powerful than the stroke of the bravest and proudest of the knights, and bears in its course the pathos of decay and ruin which was unfelt by the mediæval spirit. There was an appeal to the eye and imagination by the order and magnificence of art; but the simplicity, the tenderness, the lessons of everyday things, of the daisy on the sward, of the primrose by the river-brink, all that touches and purifies the heart, were unknown to mediæval artifice. Hence there came down to us—not more to the poets of Scotland than

of England, in some respects less to the former, but still powerful among them—a traditional form of order, and a conventional standard, as the type and test of what was to be admired. Hence the constant garden descriptions in Scottish poetry, the subordination thus of nature to art and to architecture, and the general closing of the vision to the wide, bright, God-given world beyond.

The course of the feeling for nature in Scottish poetry has in the main followed the order I have now indicated. The feeling on the part of the home-bred poet at first is merely that of agreeable physical sensation. We have expressed always the pleasure felt in sunlight, sun-heat, diffused brightness, fresh air, and shade, as simply agreeable sensations. The feeling continues pretty constantly down the current of Scottish poetry, even when higher elements had been fused with it. This perhaps is not to be wondered at, considering the exceeding rarity of most of those things in this climate of ours; and if we take into account the tall narrow dwellings within which even the highest classes of the time were cooped—"houses of stane," mere stone prisons—the low, heavy, vaulted rooms, the narrow holes in the walls that were meant to keep out the storm and the enemy, but hardly to

let in the air or the light, we need not wonder that the prime source of joy and comfort which our forefathers felt was in the fresh breeze and the clear open width of heaven.

This feeling of the physically or organically agreeable was combined with a sense of the pastoral use of the "gratious grass," and also of the various medicinal, healing, and helpful uses of herbs. And there was in this in the minds of the poets, if not an æsthetical, at least a moral feeling, which associated the fresh air and the sunlight, herb and tree, with divine love and goodness. Ample illustrations of this point will be found in the quotations that follow. But the sense of what may be called the open-air feeling is pertinently illustrated in the prose of the 'Complaynt of Scotland' as late as 1549, written evidently by a man connected with southern Scotland, who was well acquainted with the poetic literature of the country, and evidently susceptible to natural impressions. For recreation, he tells us, "I past to the greene hoilsum feildis, situat maist commodiusly fra destemperit ayr ande corrupit infectione, to resave the sweit fragrant smel of tendir gyrssis, and of hoilsum balmy flouris maist oderiferant; beside the fut of ane litil montane there ran ane fresche reveir as clear as berial." He

then refers to the bright-scaled fish in the stream, and the melodious birds on the banks. And then follows an almost poetical description of the dawn, the rising mists, the green fields, and of the various kinds of birds, with a curious naming of their different notes.* The author extols the shepherd's life as against that of towns,—"for we [shepherds] lyif on the fragrant feildis quhar we ar neureist vitht the maist delicius temperat ayr." † And when he finds himself in a pleasant meadow, he notes and extols the respective conveniences of the flowers, herbs, and grasses "for medicyn." ‡

But until a man rises above mere sensation, the feeling of what is bodily or physically agreeable,—what simply adds to his comfort or his luxury,—he has no true sense of what is beautiful, or grand, or sublime in nature, or anywhere else. He must rise above the sense of mere physical or organic agreeableness, and feel that in the beauty, the grandeur, and the power of things, there is a gratification for its own sake,—an all-sufficing gratification for him—a pure contemplative pleasure in which

* Part I., pp. 37, 38, † Ibid., p. 45.

‡ Ibid., p. 67, Murray's edition. In this, as in other quotations, I have not thought it necessary to print *u* for *v*, or *v* for *w*; otherwise all passages quoted are given from what seem to me the best texts, and these are indicated in the notes.

he is willing to rest, as a child would lay its head softly, calmly on its pillow to sleep, otherwise he has neither lot nor part in the beauty of nature or art, but is merely the Philistine on whom the light of the inner sanctuary of nature has never dawned.

Merely agreeable sensations are not the beautiful. But they frequently prove its handmaidens. They point to it, and they lead to it; they serve it. It was through agreeable sensations of this sort that our Scottish poets were attracted to outward nature. But as along with these were given objects of pleasure to the higher senses, or sides of the senses—eye and ear—such as flowers and their varied colours, the gleam of water, the blue or glowing expanse of sky, the sough of the streams, the notes of birds, the soothing moonlight,—these qualities of things which did not appeal merely or even at all to physical pleasure or wellbeing came to be liked and loved and rejoiced in for their own sakes, and hence there gradually arose in the finer minds of the times the pure, free, contemplative, and unselfish sense of the beautiful.

Nothing helped poetic feeling to rise above the mere organic or physical pleasures more than the notes of our Scottish woodland birds. In these, while highly pleasing, there is nothing helpful

physically, as the sunlight or the shade of the trees. Their song is a free disinterested harmony and joy. The delight we take in the bird's song is purely for its own sake. Their notes stirred the heart of William Dunbar in the fifteenth century, — the greatest, the truest, and richest Scottish poet of nature before Walter Scott.

"For mirth of May, wyth skippis and wyth hoppis,
The birdis sang upon the tender croppis,[1]
. . . . . .
With curiouse note, as Venus chapell clerkis;
The skyes rang for schoutyng of the larkis." *

[1] Young growths.

In the following century, Sir David Lyndsay caught up the same strain :—

"The mirthfull maves[2] maid gret melodie;
The lustye lark ascending in the air,
Numerand his naturall notis craftilie;
The gay goldspink;[3] the merll rycht myrralye;
The noyis of the nobill nychtingalis,
Redoundit[4] through the montans,[5] meids, and valis." †

[2] Song-thrush. Fr. *mauvis.*
[3] Goldfinch.
[4] Redounded.
[5] Mountains.

* *Golden Targe.*

† *Prologue to the Monarchies*, finished in 1553—Laing's ed.

This was the utterance of the national heart in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The same inspiration moved it in the seventeenth, in one of the oldest of Scottish songs preserved to us :—

"When Maggie and me were acquaint,
I carried my noddle[1] fu' hie;
Nae lintwhite in a' the gay plain,
Nae gowdspink[2] sae bonnie as she.

I whistled, I piped, and I sang,
I woo'd, but I cam nae great speed;
And now I maun wander abroad,
And lay my banes far frae the Tweed."

[1] Head.

[2] Goldfinch.

The unknown and unnamed song-writers of the Tweed and the Yarrow prolonged and enriched the strain. The Yarrow songs are resonant with the notes of birds :—

"Oh, tell sweet Willie to come down
To hear the mavis singing;
To see the birds on ilka bush,
And leaves around them hinging.
The laverock there with her white breast,
And gentle throat sae narrow;
There's sport eneuch for gentlemen
On Leader Haughs and Yarrow."*

* *Willie Drowned in Yarrow.*

It was thus the strain grew and increased in power, in compass of tone, and in delicacy of note, until it filled the whole heaven of the love-songs of Robert Burns. We have it in—

"The mellow mavis that hails the nichtfa' "—

in the poet's joyous outpourings, and in his saddest utterances, when he contrasts the sorrow of his heart with the rejoicing notes of

"the bonnie bird
That sings upon the bough."

"I see her in the dewy flowers,
I see her sweet and fair;
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
I hear her charm the air:
There's not a bonnie flower that springs
By fountain, shaw, or green;
There's not a bonnie bird that sings,
But minds me o' my Jean."

But not only in sympathy with the notes of birds does the poet sing, but in upbraiding,—that peculiar passionate flash of the poet's heart against the joy of nature:—

"Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird,
That sings upon the bough;

Thou minds me o' the happy days
When my fause Luve was true.

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird,
That sings beside thy mate;
For sae I sat, and sae I sang,
And wist na o' my fate!

Aft hae I rov'd by bonnie Doon,
To see the woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its Luve,
And sae did I o' mine."

It comes to cheer and make exultant the sad spirit of Tannahill:—

"Gloomy winter's now awa',
Saft the westlan' breezes blaw:
'Mang the birks o' Stanley shaw
The mavis sings fu' cheerie-o.

. . . . .

Tow'ring o'er the Newton woods,
Lavrocks fan the snaw-white cluds;
Siller saughs, wi' downy buds,
Adorn the banks sae brierie-o."

But it comes to its full power—its power of tenderness, delicacy, pathos—in the heart of a shepherd on the Border hills:—

"Bird of the wilderness,
Blithesome and cumberless,
Sweet be thy matin o'er moorland and lea!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place;
Oh! to abide in the desert with thee!

Wild is thy lay and loud,
Far in the downy cloud;
Love gives it energy, love gave it birth;
Where on thy dewy wing,
Where art thou journeying?
Thy lay is in heaven, thy love is on earth.

O'er fell and fountain sheen,
O'er moor and mountain green,
O'er the red streamer that heralds the day;
Over the cloudlet dim,
Over the rainbow's rim,
Musical cherub, soar, singing away!

Then, when the gloamin' comes,
Low in the heather blooms
Sweet will thy welcome and bed of love be!
Bird of the wilderness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place;
Oh! to abide in the desert with thee!"

The ear that first paused on the song of the bird, and first expressed the feeling of it in verse, was that of a true poet: he had a heart open to the pure, the refined, the pathetic of the natural world. And that song of the birds was there in this world from the first to solicit attention, to arrest by its purity, to cultivate and refine. Too little do we think of what we owe to the gentle things of nature,—the mute forms that appeal to the eye, and the voices of the living things which appeal to the ear. Yet we have grown through these—if indeed we have really grown—to delicacy of feeling, to culture and refinement. This power has been working through the ages. There was always, in the old rude times, enough of violence and blood-shed, and rough, coarse, outdoor life. But there was more than this; there were quiet undercurrents of inspiration. We talk of our forefathers as "Saxon warriors," and we speak of "the forests of the North," and we think only of rough strokes, of slaughter, of the chase and the wassail bout. Yet, while "the raven of Ivan flapped his bloody wings over the dead faces on the battle-fields, the gold-finch and the nightingale," as has been said, "sang in the shade; the partridge, with her young, nestled secure in the corn-field; the lark rose before the

shepherd of a morning, and carolled over the husbandman at his labour; and the rook, the pigeon, and the sparrow flitted around him, and claimed their pittance." The gentle things of nature were surrounding him and beseeching his heart—asking for tenderness, asking for sympathy. Think you they asked always in vain? Think you there was no forecast, in the hearts of the people of those times, of the feeling in these immortal lines?—

"The Being that is in the clouds and air,
That is in the green leaves of the groves,
Maintains a deep and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures whom He loves.

. . . . . .

One lesson, shepherd, let us two divide,
Taught both by what she shows and what conceals,
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With suffering of the meanest thing that feels."

With reference to the second point—sympathy with the grander, sterner aspects of nature and natural objects — it has been said that this is entirely awanting in the earlier Scottish poets. There is, it is alleged, no reference to mountain,

gorge, or cataract, as an object of poetic interest, in the writings of Henryson, Dunbar, Gawin Douglas, Sir David Lyndsay, Montgomery,—the period from 1450 to 1560,—though they drew largely on nature, and are full of descriptions of natural objects—fresh waters, woods, flowers, birds. Any trace of the feeling for mountain scenery, so characteristic a feature of the country, akin to that which we find constantly in Ossian, there is none; or to the strong delight in the grand, awful, and overwhelming, which we find in Leyden and Scott. This is shown both by the general absence of reference in the earlier poets to such aspects of nature, and by the way in which they deal with objects to us grand and sublime, when they happen to come across them.

It was only gradually that, even in English poetry, there arose a purer feeling for the mountain. There is very little of it, if indeed any, in Shakespeare, with all his universality, so frequently lauded; and even Milton, with his directness of vision and sympathy, went over Switzerland—where Geneva slopes down to the green waters of Lake Leman, and the Alps of Chamouni and the Dent de Midi lift to the blue heavens their crowns of gleaming snow, radiant over many lands—with-

out bringing back an image of them which he thought fit to express. It was reserved for a poet of a wholly different cast, who had known and loved in his youth the mountains of Scotland, and who, whatever were his defects, had an ardent soul, and a deep, wide insight into all that was grandest in the outward world, to feel and to say in regard to this scenery what had not been said by any English poet before.

"The stars are forth, the moon above the tops
Of the snow-shining mountains. Beautiful!
I linger yet with nature, for the night
Hath been to me a more familiar face
Than that of man, and in her starry shade
Of dim and solitary loveliness
I learned the language of another world." *

Circumstances are not wanting in the history of the older Scottish poets that may help us to understand how the feelings of terror and dread — at least, of repugnance—would naturally take precedence of the poetical, and for long dominate over it. For one thing, the constantly recurring disturbances in the country—arising either from war with "the auld enemies of England," or from civil

* Byron, *Manfred*.

feud — made men familiar with one object of æsthetic feeling, war array and martial prowess, in circumstances by no means fitted to bring it within the sphere of purely contemplative sympathy and admiration; for it meant loss of kin, desolation of the country, burning of house and home, — uneasiness, trouble, disquiet. Misty mountain and moorland by day would conceal the approaching foe, or the stealthy reiver's troop; and the beacon-fires by night failed rather to inspire the natural feeling of grandeur, as they flashed one after one on the night, when it was known and felt that the enemy had then crossed the Border, and were in full march on hearth and home. To us, distance in time from the events enables us to feel their poetic power; and Scott, as every one knows, has used grandly the lighting of the beacons as a means of imaginative impression. But he has one stanza in which he expresses the feeling of one living at the time, which is very different from the feeling we now have:—

"Is yon the star on Penchryst Pen,
That rises slowly to her ken,
And, spreading broad its wavering light,
Shakes its loose tresses on the night?

Is yon red glare the western star?
Oh! 'tis the beacon-blaze of war!
Scarce could she draw her tighten'd breath,
For well she knew the fire of death!"

Moor, hope, and slack (hill-pass) were associated with deeds of violence, feud, and hostile inroad, and inspired corresponding feelings of dread and repugnance. To this we must add the circumstance of climate in Scotland, as it might be three or four hundred years ago,—its savage roughness in winter, with imperfect housing and shelter; the shivering cottage *but* and *ben*, and the miserable lodgment in even the holds of the lairds—the old peel towers. The sweep of the winter wind and the pinch of the winter snow told far too directly on physical sensations to admit of much or any imaginative sentiment regarding them. Superstition, too—at least, in some of its forms—did its part in repressing æsthetical feeling. The flooded river would frequently sweep away the crossing horseman. Popular imagination created the dreaded kelpie that swelled the flood, or strangled the drowning man in the stream.

"O, he has ridden o'er field and fell,
Through muir and moss and mony a mire;

His spurs o' steel were sair to bide,
And frae her fore-feet flew the fire.

. . . . . .

The side was stey[1] and the bottom deep,
Frae bank to brae the water pouring;
And the bonny grey mare did sweat for fear,
As she heard the water-kelpie roaring."

[1] Steep.

When winter storms raged for more than half the year across the trackless heights, a dark fancy, left free, added its dreaded creations to the scene, and saw unearthly shapes in the mist,—sometimes that of a terrible figure stalking dimly with uprooted tree,—and heard weird sounds on the wild and desolate heights. From all this we can well understand how it took centuries before *sentiment* overcame *sensation* enough to allow the pure calm feelings of grandeur and sublimity to work themselves free of the alloy of dominating dread and terror.

"Lakes and pits on the tops of mountains," wrote Leyden, early in this century, "are regarded in the Border with a degree of superstitious horror, as the porches or entrances of the subterraneous habitations of the fairies, from which confused murmurs, the cries of children, moaning voices, the ringing of bells, and the sounds of musi-

cal instruments, are often supposed to be heard. Round these hills the green fairy-circles are believed to wind in a spiral direction till they reach the descent to the central cavern; so that, if the unwary traveller be benighted on the charmed ground, he is inevitably conducted by an invisible power to the fearful descent."*

Thus it was that, so late as one hundred and fifty years ago, a man of culture and a poet held as positively unlovely, if not naturally dreadful and repugnant, a range of Lowland mountain-heights which to the modern eye seem wonderful in width of crescent reach, and in beauty of perpetually unfolding contour. They enclose glens of deepest solitude and softest green margin, cut often indeed into cleugh and scaur by winter floods, that break downwards from heights scored with peaty hags. And just because, beneath these overshadowing heights, there is an absolute sense of nature, and a complete absence of man and his belongings, this writer, with his conventional taste, could only feel them as "black, craigie, and of a melancholy aspect, with deep and horrid precipices, a wearisome and comfortless piece of way for travellers." †

* Leyden, note to *Scenes of Infancy*, Part I.

† Pennycuik, *Description of Tweeddale*, p. 45, ed. 1815.

This may be taken as representing Scottish feeling; but let us read the language of one of the typical men of the time in English literature, and we shall find that he had not even the most elementary vision of grandeur in hill scenery, or even of beauty in free nature. His soul was simply callous, and incapable of any æsthetical pleasure from these aspects of things, as presented even in the Western Highlands of Scotland.

"The hills," says Dr Johnson, "are almost totally covered with dark heath; and even that appears checked in its growth. What is not heath is nakedness—a little diversified now and then by a stream, rushing down the steep. An eye accustomed to flowery pastures and waving harvests is astonished and repelled by this wide extent of hopeless sterility. The appearance is that of matter incapable of form or usefulness; dismissed by nature from her care; disinherited of her favours, and left in its original elemental state; or quickened only with one sullen power of useless vegetation." *

As has been well said of this passage: "An eye accustomed to see the beauties of landscape only in 'flowery pastures' and 'waving harvests,' cannot be

* *Western Isles*, p. 84.

attracted by the great and sublime in nature. It will bring everything to its own model, and measure the proportions of a giant by the limbs of a dwarf."*

Yet, shortly after Pennycuik's time, in the decade from 1790 to 1800, on the main slope of these mountains to which he refers, and in hearing of their numerous burns, an untaught shepherd lad, alone but for his dog and his hirsel, nurtured his muse 'neath summer sun and 'mid winter storm, until it blossomed in the delicate fairy-beauty and the weird power of the 'Queen's Wake.' The shepherd, a child of nature's own, reaped the rich harvest of

"a quiet eye
That sleeps and broods on its own heart."

Surely any dread of the hills, if ever it was in the soul of the shepherd, had passed away and given place to the freest love and sympathy, when he sang—

"O list the mystic lore sublime
Of fairy tales of ancient time.
I learned them in the lonely glen,
The last abodes of living men,

* *Gilpin*, vol. ii. p. 120.

Where never stranger came our way,
By summer night or winter day;
Where neighbouring hind or cot was none;
Our converse was with heaven alone,—
With voices through the clouds that sung,
And brooding storms that round us hung.
Oh, lady! judge, if judge ye may,
How stern and ample was the sway
Of themes like these when darkness fell,
And grey-hair'd sires the tale would tell!
When doors were barr'd, and eldren dame
Plied at her task beside the flame,
That through the smoke and gloom alone
On dim and umber'd faces shone.
The bleat of mountain-goat on high
That from the cliff came quavering by,
The echoing rock, the rushing flood,
The cataract's swell, the moaning wood,
The undefined and mingled hum,
Voice of the desert never dumb!—
All these have left within this heart
A feeling tongue can ne'er impart;
A 'wildered and unearthly flame,
A something that's without a name."

In connection with, and as an evidence of, the

defect in even the cultured men of these times to appreciate the grand in nature or in art, there is, so far as I know, no reference in the poetry to the cathedral architecture of the country—the sculptured epics of the times. Alexander Barclay, in the time of James V., makes a reference to certain pictures on the wall of a cathedral church, somewhat in the spirit of censure.* Henryson, in 'The Abbay Walk,' has a very sparing reference:—

> "Allone as I went up and doun
> In ane Abbay was fair to see." †

But I find no traces of sympathy for the power and the grandeur of the noble piles of Melrose, Kelso, or Roslin, of Elgin, Dunblane, or Glasgow, though these were standing in those years in their unmutilated grace and symmetry. The irregularity and the sternness of mountain scenery may partly explain the aversion from it, but the harmonious regularity of the cathedral piles forbids this explanation of the indifference to them. Perhaps there was an aversion on the part of the lettered poets to the not always lettered clergy of the time; or perhaps it was that the Scottish mind had then, as now, a difficulty in fusing religious and æstheti-

* Sibbald, vol. ii. p. 409. † *Works*, ed. Laing, p. 15.

cal feeling. But what contemporary poets passed by in the fulness of its beauty and symmetry, Scott has pictured in ruin, and renewed for the imagination of all time:—

"The moon on the east oriel shone
Through slender shafts of shapely stone,
By foliaged tracery combined;
Thou would'st have thought some fairy's hand
'Twixt poplars straight the osier wand,
In many a freakish knot, had twined;
Then framed a spell, when the work was done,
And changed the willow wreaths to stone."

I do not know whether it was that our Scottish winters in the old times were worse than now—more snell and more bitter—but certainly the references to winter, and the descriptions of it in the Scottish poets generally, are of the most shivering sort. There is a wail for the departed summer, and a longing for its return, with pictures of present discomfort and something like disgust. As the sunlight and the heat of summer attracted our forefathers, the frost, the snow, and the storms of winter seem to have sent them cowering back within their heavy-walled houses. Winter was to them colourless, birdless, sunless, unlovely. For

the power of storm, or the gleam of snow, or the clear starry heaven, or the moon's unspotted light in the winter sky, there was no sympathetic feeling. Winter scenes were the objects of a shuddering repulsion. The only thing in the winter pictures that is at all poetic or softened is an occasional reference to, and sympathy with, the sentient creatures—stray traveller or labouring man, or sheep, or oxen, that are out in the cold.*

Thomson, in 'Winter,' was the first Scottish poet who showed anything like æsthetical feeling for the snowstorm; and in this he was followed by James Grahame, the author of 'The Sabbath.' It was reserved, however, for David Gray, the author of 'The Luggie,' to enter into the very spirit of the storm, and to extract from it the essence of beauty and delight. †

* See quotations from Gawin Douglas below, p. 278.

† Illustrative quotations from Thomson, Grahame, and Gray, will be found in the second volume, under the appropriate headings.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROMANCES: THOMAS THE RHYMOUR TO CLERK OF TRANENT.

(THE 13TH TO THE 15TH CENTURY.)

THE earliest poetry—both romance and ballad—in Scotland is popularly associated with the name of Thomas of Erceldoune, or "Thomas Rymor de Ercildune," more generally known as Thomas the Rhymour. That there was such a personage, and that he lived in the thirteenth century, we have sufficient historical evidence; and we may gather, too, from different sources, some hints as to his character and position. These the imagination, tradition, and mythic fancy of subsequent generations have wrought into the cherished conception of one who not only had the gift of poesy but that of prophecy, and the mysterious privilege of communion with

unearthly powers, in the form of Fairy. The original person of the popular tradition seems to have lived in a tower to the west of the village of Erceldoune, now Earlston, on the Leader Water, about two miles from its junction with the Tweed,—in the heart really of what became the minstrel region of Scotland. To the east of the village stood a tower or castle of the great Earl of March (Dunbar), who was the friend, and probably the feudal lord, of Thomas the Rhymour. Erceldoune was then a hamlet in the forest, and the Earl's castle a hunting-seat, used sometimes by the kings, for royal charters were occasionally dated there. In what year Thomas was born, or when exactly he died, we can only conjecture. But charter data afford the probability that he lived from about 1219 to 1294 or 1299.*

Besides the rhyming prophecies attributed to him, there are associated with his name the romance of 'Sir Tristrem,' the romantic ballad of the Thornton MS., 'Tomas off Ersseldoune,' and the separate or traditional ballad of a more modern type, evidently founded on the poem of

* See *Border History and Poetry*, p. 230—where, however, the dates 1162 and 1189 ought to be 1230 and 1240.

this older MS. This ballad survives in three forms—viz., that of Mrs Brown's MS., printed by Jamieson;* that given by Scott in the 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border;'† and a third from the Campbell MSS., given in Child's 'English and Scottish Popular Ballads.'‡

The authorship and date of 'Sir Tristrem' are, of course, matters of historical dispute. Sir Frederick Madden refuses to acknowledge it as the work of Thomas of Erceldoune, and refers it to a considerably later date.§ It is at any rate in the Northern dialect of which the Lowland Scottish language was a form; and while it deals with a romance of the Arthurian cycle, it has in its scanty references to outward nature the kind of feeling for it which subsequently characterised the poetry of Scotland. There is regret for the passing summer and the shivering feeling for winter which runs through our mediæval poetry, and well down to our own time.

"This semly somers day
In winter it is nought sen;[1]

[1] Seen.

* *Popular Ballads*, vol. ii. p. 7.

† Vol. ii. p. 251 (1802). ‡ Part II., p. 324 (1884).

§ On this point see *Border History and Poetry*, p. 240 *et seq.*

This greves[1] wexen al gray,
That in her[2] time were grene:
So dos this world, y say,
Y wis[3] and nought at wene,[4]
The gode bene al oway,[5]
That our elders have bene." *

[1] Groves.
[2] Their.
[3] Know, wist.
[4] Without doubt.
[5] Away.

Of 'Tomas off Ersseldoune' the oldest MS. and the best is that known as the *Thornton*, dating from 1430 to 1440. It is in the Northern dialect. It is probable, nay, almost certain, that even this is a version of an ancient poem, due probably to the Rhymour himself. It is full of the spirit of the time. There is the recognition of the supernatural world,—in this case the sphere of Fairy; there is the curious popular theory of superior gifts and genius through contact and intercourse with beings of another and higher sphere than that of this world — Middle-erd. Thomas of Erceldoune had evidently impressed the imagination of his own day,—and he grew in influence through the ages as only a man of power in an untrained and impressible age could grow. He

* *Sir Tristrem*, Scottish Text Society, recently well edited by Mr G. P. McNeil, 1885-86.

must needs draw his strength of poetry and prophecy from mysterious communion with spiritual forms and personalities;—he was so high above the ordinary level of men and their standards. Hence in his lonely and probably prolonged wanderings on the moors of the Border hills, he had been transported to Fairyland. And when he returned to his tower by the Leader, he still lay under the responsibility of a recall to the land and the personages from whom he had received his endowment of superior insight, if not even of poesy; and so true and keen was his sense of the powers who had so endowed him, that it needed only the two gentle creatures of the wild—the hart and the hind—to make known their presence, that he might arise and go forth at their silent bidding to the realm of the powers of the Nether-erd. Thomas of Erceldoune, seen in the light in which we may now see him, was simply a man with an awakening to the powers of outward nature,—especially to the dreamy, weird personifications of the green hillside and the unpeopled moorland and glen. He had in him, too, the feeling of the spring-tide and the rejoicing birds, — the love of lonely lingering among the hills, the sense of the unspeakable

silence and solitude of the benty moorlands, and the poetic yearning for some form of a mysterious life with which he might commune on the wild. It was thus the men of his time—perhaps even he himself—pictured him as the friend, companion, and lover of the Fairy Queen.

What other interpretation can we now put on passages like these?—

"As I me wente this endres daye,[1]
Fulle faste in mynd makand my mone,[2]
In a mery mornynge of Maye,
By Huntle bankkes my selfe allone,
I herd the jaye, and the throsttle kokke,*[3]
The mawys[4] menyde hir of hir songe,[5]
The wodewale[6] † beryde als a belle,[7]
That alle the wode a-bowte me ronge.
Allonne in a loning[8] thus als I laye,
Undyre-nethe[9] a semely tree,

1 Bygone day.
2 Moan.
3 Here merle or blackbird.
4 Mavis, song-thrush.
5 Sung plaintively.
6 Green woodpecker or witwall.
7 Gave forth a bell-like note.
8 In longynge, Thornton; Lansdowne as in text, meaning an opening between fields for passage of cattle, and also pasture field itself.
9 Underneath.

* *Merula* is *throstle* in Alfric's Vocabulary, 10th century; in AS. Vocabulary, 11th century; and in others following. In *A Pictorial Vocabulary* of the 15th century, *merulus* is translated *thyrsttle-cok*. Another MS. reading of text is *merle*. The reference here is doubtless to the *merula vulgaris*, or blackbird—a species of thrush.

† Also *wodehake*, *wodhack*, same as *reyne-fowle*, *picus*; see *Promptorium Parvulorum* (1440). Identified by some with the golden oriole, greenfinch, &c.

[I was ware of a lady gaye,
Come rydyng ouyr a fayre le].
If I solde rytt[1] to domesdaye,
With my tonge, to wrobbe[2] and wrye,[3]
Certanely that lady gaye,
Never bese scho[4] askryede[5] for mee.
Her palfraye was a dappill graye,
Swylke[6] one ne saghe[7] I never none;
Als dose the sonne on someres daye,
That faire lady hir selfe scho schone."

[1] Should write.
[2] & [3] Murray suggests "to wriggle and twist with the tongue."
[4] She.
[5] Described.
[6] Such.
[7] Saw.

The lady may be called the Queen of Fairy. She was simply the impersonation of the morning of May—what a fervent poetic imagination, nature-nursed, would create and revel in. After Thomas had spent his time in Fairyland, he is brought back by the Queen to Middle-erd; and the same imagery is repeated:—

"Scho broghte him agayne to Eldoune tree,
Undir-nethe that grenewode spraye;
In Huntlee bannkes es mery to bee,
Whare fowles[8] synges[9] bothe nyght and daye.
Fferre owt[10] in yone mountane graye,
Thomas, my fawkone biggis[11] a neste;
A fawconne es an Erlis[12] praye;
Ffor-thi[13] in na place may he reste.

[8] Birds.
[9] Sing—present indicative plural of the verb.
[10] Far out.
[11] Builds.
[12] Also yrons, erne's,—eagle's.
[13] Wherefore =for why.

Ffare wele, Thomas, I wend my waye,
Ffor me by-houys ouer thir benttis browne."[1] *

[1] It behoves me to go over the brown bent.

Nor is there lacking some imagination of the dim and awesome places of the earth—

"Scho ledde hym in at Eldone hill[2]
Undir-nethe a derne[3] lee;
Where it was dirke[4] als mydnyght mirke,[5]
And ever the water till his knee.
The montenans[6] of dayes three,
He herd bot[7] swoghynge[8] of the flode,[9]
At the laste, he sayde 'full wa es mee!
Almaste I dye, for fawte of fode.'"[10] †

[2] A hill of three summits on the Tweed near Melrose.
[3] Dark, secret.
[4] Dark.
[5] Black, dark.
[6] Amount, length.
[7] Only.
[8] Soughing.
[9] Flood.
[10] Lack of food.

The version of the traditionary ballad given by Scott in the 'Minstrelsy' amplifies this, in the stanzas—

"O they rode on, and farther on,
And they waded thro' rivers aboon the knee;
And they saw neither sun nor moon,
But they heard the roaring o' the sea.

* *Thornton MS.*; see Murray, p. 16. † *Ibid.*, p. 10.

It was mirk, mirk night, and there was nae
sterne[1] light,
And they waded thro' red blude to the
knee;
For a' the blude that's shed on earth
Rins thro' the springs o' that countrie."

[1] Star.

These stanzas are neither in Mrs Brown's version nor in that of the Campbell MS. They are evidently suggested by the stanza of the old version already quoted. They are a continuance, gruesome enough, due probably to Scott himself. They have the touch of the mood of Scott's mind at the period of the compilation of the 'Minstrelsy,' which was steeped in the German romantic ballad. This was the early period of Scott's inspiration, and we know that the two great influences then in force were the romanticism of Germany and the weird mingling of the natural and the supernatural in the traditional character and writings of Thomas of Erceldoune.*

Some touches there are in the ballads which are not to be found in the early romance,—rather are substituted for descriptions there. And these

* See *Life*, vol. i., cc. vii., viii.; vol. ii., cc. ix., x.

touches could have been made only by a minstrel in Lowland Scotland, familiar with its scenery. In the original there is reference to the "heghe mountayne,"

"Where synfull soules are passed thir payne,"

the ways to paradise, to the place of suffering, to the fire of hell, and to the "faire castelle" that stands on the "heghe hill," whither the Queen of Fairy is leading her captive. But in the Scottish ballad, this latter reference obtains a colouring and localising which are quite unmistakable:—

"And see not ye that bonnie road
That winds about the fernie brae?
That is the road to fair Elfland,
Where thou and I this night maun gae."[1]

[1] Must go.

This is Mrs Brown's version, and nothing can be more characteristic of the Scottish Lowland landscape than—

"that bonnie road
That winds about the fernie brae."

Still after his death the Rhymour might be met with by those of open vision on the Low-

land moorlands, to solve problems of the anxious future :—

"Well on my way as I forth wente,
Out through a land, beside a lee,
I met a beirne[1] upon a bente;[2]
Me thought him seemlie for to see." *

"To dead are many doughtie[3] dight,[4]
Thearat the Lyon likes ill,
And raises his baner hie on hight,
Upon the moore that is so gray,
Beside a headles Croce[5] of stone,
There shall the Eagle die that day,
And the read[6] Lyon win the name.
The Eagles then sal lose the gree[7]
That they have had this manie day,
The read Lyon shal win renowne,
Win all the field and beare away;
One Crowe shal come, another shal goe,
And drink the gentle blood so free." †

[1] Large man, man.
[2] Here for moorland.
[3] Brave.
[4] Sent.
[5] Cross.
[6] Red.
[7] Rank.

Besides the 'Sir Tristrem' of Thomas of Erceldoune, we have at least three Scottish poems of this early period of the same romantic type—viz., 'Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knyght'

* *The Whole Prophecie of Scotland* (1603).
† *Prophecie of Thomas Rymour* (1603).

'The Awntyrs of Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne,' and 'Golagros and Gawane.' These poems, at the latest, date from the first half of the fourteenth century to the first quarter, or perhaps the middle, of the fifteenth. Wyntoun, in his 'Chronicle' (1420-24), refers to the 'Gret Gest of Arthure' and the 'Awntyre of Gawane' as already in existence, and attributes them to Hucheon or Huchowne of the Awle Ryale (Royal Palace), conjecturally identified by Laing with Sir Hew of Eglintoun. Supposing the 'Awntyre of Gawane' of Wyntoun to be identical with 'Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knyght,' this would carry back the poem to the reign of David II. (1329-70), for Eglintoun, then a knight, was one of the Scottish prisoners taken in a raid into Northumberland in 1342. Irving says he is supposed to have died soon after, in 1376. 'Golagros and Gawane,' as also 'The Awntyrs of Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne,' Madden considers as of later date than 'Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knyght,' and refers them to the fifteenth century, as the work of Clerk of Tranent. He identifies the 'Awntyre of Gawane,' referred to by Wyntoun, with 'Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knyght.' At any rate,

we may consider those poems as Scottish productions, as specimens of the language of the country at the time, and as written between 1350 and 1425—that is, from the time of David II. to a date not long after the death of Robert III. in 1406.

The principal Scottish Romances centre round Syr Gawayn—who is identified with Walwanus, son of Loth, King of the Lothians, and Anna, the half-sister of Arthur. Gawayn was himself held to be Lord of Galloway. Syr Gawayn was especially the Scottish romance hero from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. He was the nephew and ally of Arthur in his contests with the Saxons,—contests many of them fought in the Lowlands of Scotland,—and thus naturally became an object of interest and mythical admiration to the Lowland Scot. He may, indeed, be said to have been the national hero, until his place was taken by Wallace and Bruce, and the good Sir James of Douglas. Among the Knights of the Round Table Syr Gawayn was in renown second to none:—

"Noble he was and curteis,[1] [1] Courteous.
Honour of him men rede and seis;
He lufed mesure and fair beryng,[2] [2] Bearing.

Pride ne boste[1] lufed he no thing:
Fals and fikel lesyng[2] he hated,
Auantour[3] alle suilk[4] he bated;[5]
More he gaf[6] than he hette,
More he did than terme of sette."[7]*

[1] Nor threat.
[2] Lying.
[3] Adventure.
[4] Such.
[5] Lessened the merit of.
[6] Gave.
[7] Did more than he promised.

It is of some interest in these times to find mention of a younger brother of Gawayn as Gaheriot. *Herrit's Dyke*, in the old district of Lothian, is at once suggested; and we need hardly mention the modern *Heriot* and *Heriot Water*.

Sir F. Madden has suggested that Syr Gawayn was the prototype of Spenser's chivalrous Sir Calidore. With equal probability we may see in him the model on which the character of one nearer his own time—the good Sir James of Douglas—was formed. Douglas, as depicted by Barbour, showed the chivalry, the generosity, courtesy, and self-sacrifice which were to be learned in the Romance School of the thirteenth century, whether he had been trained in the Norman-French prototypes of the Scottish Romances, or directly in those Romances themselves.

The Scottish poems of this epoch reflect in

* Robert of Brunne: quoted in *Syr Gawayn*, p. xiii.

their subjects, style, manner of treatment, and sentiments, the romances current in Western Europe regarding Arthur and the Arthurian legends. The adventures, the names of the heroes, are at the same time generally localised in the north countrie—that is, in the south of Scotland and the ancient kingdom of Strathclyde, which stretched from Alclyde to the Derwent. These poems refer to heroes and incidents which were of popular interest in Lowland Scotland, ere the story and the exploits of the national heroes —Wallace and Bruce—had taken so strongly the form of current ballad as to absorb the mind of the country, and finally efface any general interest in the Arthurian legends. After the time of Barbour, Fordun, Wyntoun, and Blind Harry, popular interest in Scotland was divided between the Arthurian Romances and the poems regarding the native heroes. The latter finally prevailed, although, up to the date of the 'Complaynt of Scotland' (1549), we have evidence of the popularity of the Arthurian Romances. This decline in general attraction is confirmed by the fact that, while in England and other countries the Arthurian Romances now entered on a stage of disintegration, in which the larger tales were

broken up into popular ballad episodes, this was not so in Scotland, or at least in a very partial manner. The chief exceptions are the passing into ballad form of the original lay of 'Tomas off Ersseldoune' and of 'Gray Steill.' The Arthurian cycle of 'Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knyght' at length practically disappeared, at least for the people, and gave way to the new national poetry.*

This is how the poet touches the nature around him:—

"After Crysten-masse[1] com the crabbed lentoun,[2]
That fraytez[3] flesch wyth the fysche and fode[4] more symple;
Bot thenne the weder[5] of the worlde wyth wynter hit[6] threpez,[7]
Colde clingez adoun,[8] cloudez up lyften,[9]
Schyre[10] schedez[11] the rayn in schowerez ful warme,
Fallez upon fayre flat, flowrez there schewen,
Bothe groundez and the greves[12] grene ar her wedez,[13]
Bryddez[14] busken[15] to bylde,[16] and bremlych[17] syngen,[18]

1 Christmas.
2 Lent.
3 Perhaps eats—AS. *fretan.*
4 Food.
5 Sky, weather.
6 It.
7 Chides, contends.
8 Causes to shrink below.
9 Uprise.
10 Clearly.
11 Sheds, pours.
12 Groves.
13 Clothing, foliage.
14 Birds.
15 Prepare.
16 Build.
17 Vigorously.
18 Sing.

* See *History and Poetry of the Scottish Border*, p. 262 *et seq.*

For solace of the softe somer[1] that sues[2] ther after
And blossumez bolne[3] to blowe,
Bi rawez[4] rych and ronk,[5]
Then notez noble in noze,[6] bi bonk.[7]
Ar herde in wod so wlonk.[8]

[1] Summer. [2] Follows. [3] Swell. [4] In rows. [5] Strong, rank. [6] Notes noble in sound. [7] On bank. [8] Beautiful, fair.

After the sesoun of somer wyth the soft wyndez,
Quen Zeferus syflez[9] hym self on sedez and erbez,
Wela wynne[10] is the wort[11] that woxes[12] ther oute,
When the donkande[13] dewe dropez of the levez,[14]
To bide[15] a blyssful blusch of the bryght sunne.
Bot thene hyzes hervest,[16] and hardenes hym sone,[17]
Warnez hym for the wynter to wax ful rype;
He dryves wyth droght the dust for to ryse,
Fro the face of the folde to flyze[18] ful hize;[19]
Wrothe[20] wynde of the welkyn[21] wrastelez[22] wyth the sunne,
The levez lancen[23] fro the lynde,[24] and lyghten[25] on the grounde,
And all grayes[26] the gres, that grene watz ere;[27]
Thenne al rypez[28] and rotez[29] that ros upon fyrst,[30]

[9] Blows whistling. [10] Well or full joyous. [11] Herb. [12] Waxes, grows. [13] Moistening. [14] Leaves. [15] To endure, await. [16] Harvest hastens. [17] Grows hoar soon. [18] Fly. [19] High. [20] Angry, violent. [21] Sky. [22] Wrestles. [23] Shoot or fall down quickly. [24] Lime-tree [25] Alight. [26] Grows gray. [27] Was before. [28] Becomes ripe. [29] Rots. [30] That first grew up.

And ther zirnez[1] the zere[2] in yisterdayez mony, no sage.[3]
And wynter wyndez azayn[4], as the worlde askez,
Til Mezel-mas[5] mone,[6]
Watz cumen[7] wyth wynter wage;[8]
Then thenkkez[9] Gawan ful sone,
Of his anious[10] uyage.[11] *
. . . . . .
Sumwhyle[12] with wormez[13] he werrez,[14] and wyth wolues als,
Sumwhyle with woodwos,[15] that woned[16] in the knarrez,[17]
Bothe wyth bullez and berez, and borez other quyle,[18]
And etaynez[19] that hym a-nelede,[20] of the hezе felle;[21]
. . . . . .
For werre wrathed[22] hym not so much, that wynter was wors,
When the colde cler water fro the cloudez schadden,[23]
And fres[24] er hit felle myght to the fale erthe,[25]
Ner slayne wyth the slete, he sleped in his yrnes,[26]
Mo[27] nyghtez[28] then in noghe[29] in naked rokkez,

1 Passes.
2 Year—*i.e.*, the year passes away in yesterdays.
3 Man.
4 Returns again.
5 Michael-mas.
6 Moon.
7 Was come.
8 Surety.
9 Thinketh.
10 Fatiguing.
11 Expedition.
12 Sometimes.
13 Serpents, dragons.
14 Wars.
15 Wild men, monsters.
16 Dwelt.
17 Rocks.
18 Time.
19 Giants.
20 Approached.
21 High fells.
22 War damaged.
23 Shed.
24 Froze.
25 Perhaps brown earth, as later *fauch.*
26 Armour.
27 Many.
28 Nights.
29 Nigh, inside.

* Fytte II., st. i., ii.

Ther as claterande fro the crest the colde borne[1] rennez,[2]
And henged heze[3] ouer his hede in hard iisse ikkles.[4]
. . . . . .
Bi a mounte[5] on the morne meryly he rydes,
Into a forest ful dep, that ferly watz wylde,[6]
Hize hillez[7] on uche a halve,[8] and holt wodez under,[9]
Of hore okez[10] ful hoge[11] a hundreth to-geder;
The hasel and the haz-thorne[12] were harled al samen,[13]
With roze raged mosse[14] rayled ay where,[15]
With mony bryddez[16] unblythe[17] upon bare twyges,
That pitosly ther piped for pyne[18] of the colde.*

Now nezez[19] the nuzere,[20] and the nyght[21] passez,
The day dryvez[22] to the derk, as dryghtyn[23] biddez;
Bot wylde wederez[24] of the worlde wakned[25] thereoute,
Clowdes kesten[26] kenly[27] the colde to the erthe,
Wyth nyze[28] in noghe of the northe,[29] the naked to tene;[30]
The snawe[31] snitered[32] ful snart,[33] that snayped[34] the wylde;

* Fytte II., st. x., xi.

1 Stream, burn.
2 Runs.
3 Hung high.
4 Icicles.
5 Hill.
6 Was wondrously wild.
7 High hills.
8 Each side.
9 Coppice-wood below.
10 Hoar-oaks.
11 Huge.
12 Haw-thorn.
13 Drawn or mixed all together.
14 Rough ragged moss.
15 Spread everywhere.
16 Birds.
17 Sad.
18 Pain.

19 Draws near.
20 New year.
21 Night.
22 Drives.
23 The Lord.
24 Weather.
25 Awakened.
26 Cast.
27 Keenly.
28 Noise.
29 In the direction of the north.
30 Grieve.
31 Snow.
32 Drove—drifted—perhaps cut.
33 Sharply.
34 Nipped.

The werbelande [1] wynde wapped fro the hyze,[2]
And drof uche dale [3] ful of dryftes [4] ful grete.
The leude [5] lystened ful wel, that lez [6] in his bedde,
Thaz [7] he lowkez [8] his liddez,[9] ful lyttel he slepes;
Bi uch [10] kok that crue,[11] he knwe [12] wel the steuen (?)." [13] *

1 Whistling (?).
2 Flew or struck from the heights.
3 Drove each dale.
4 Drifts.
5 Man, knight.
6 Lay.
7 Though, also *thoz*.
8 Closes.
9 Eyelids.
10 Each.
11 Crew.
12 Knew.
13 If *steuen*, it means voice.

These passages are very interesting, as being probably the earliest surviving descriptions of the scenes of nature in the Scottish language. They are eminently truthful. With the single allowable reference to Zephyrus, there is no borrowed foreign allusion. They are, moreover, complete and at the same time distinctive pictures. Certain of the features are most characteristic, and most happily expressed. Thus we have the weather of the world "threeping" with winter; the passing blissful blush of the sun on the falling dew-drop; the wroth wind of the welkin wrestling with the sun; the passing

* Fytte IV., st. i. The letter printed *z* in these extracts is in the original 3. This seems to be equivalent at different times to the modern *z*, *s*, *g*, *gh* as in *knyght*, and *y*.

of the year into many yesterdays; the bleak aspect, the bare trees, and the piteous piping of the birds in winter; the sharp cutting snow; the "werbelande" wind striking violently from the heights, and filling each dale with drift. The minstrel who painted those strokes had as true and fine an eye for his native scenery as any subsequent Scottish poet, down even to our own time.

In the 'Awntyrs of Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne,' the prevailing feeling about nature is that of the simple organic pleasure in fresh air, early morning, sunlight, greenery, and the free forest life. The dresses and equipments of ladies and knights occupy much more of the minstrel's attention than the sights and sounds, the glories and the gleams, of the world of earth and sky. He pauses on those, but not on the natural scenes around him. Incident fills up the rest of the poem. Yet there is a fine freshness in the whole of outdoor life and enjoyment, and there are some touches higher than the mere gratification which the average sportsman has in nature. The free, joyous outdoor life is well pictured:—

"In Kynge Arthure tyme ane awntyr[1] by-tyde,[2]
By the Terne Wathelyne,[3] als[4] the buke tellis;
Als he to Carelele was commene, that conqueroure kyde,[5]
Withe dukes and with ducheperes,[6] that with that dere duellys,
For to hunnte at the herdys, that lange hase bene hyde;
And one a day thay tham dighte[7] to the depe dellis,
To felle[8] of the femmales in the foreste wele frythede,[9]
Faire in the fernysone[10] tyme, by frythis[11] and fellis:[12]
Thus to the wode[13] are thay wente,[14] the wlonkeste in wedys,[15]
Both the kynge, and the qwene,
And alle the doghety[16] by-dene;[17]
Syr Gawane, gayeste one grene,—
Dame Gayenoure he ledis." [18] *

1 Adventure.
2 Befell.
3 Near Hesketh, in Cumberland, in Inglewood Forest, between Penrith and Carlisle.
4 As.
5 Manifest—hence renowned.
6 Douzepairs, as in France; noblemen.
7 Prepared, made ready.
8 To strike down.
9 Wooded.
10 The close time in hunting.
11 Enclosed woods, hence afterwards applied to fields for cattle or arable purposes.
12 Hills, high moorlands.
13 Wood.
14 Gone; wend, to go.
15 Fairest in garments.
16 Brave.
17 Continuously, or perhaps company riding in order.
18 Leads.

We have a fine touch in the following, one of the earliest references to the soughing of the stream, so characteristic of the rising and falling motion of the north-country waters:—

* St. i.

"And by the stremys[1] so strange, that swyftly swoghes,[2]
Thay wery[3] the wilde swyne,[4] and wyrkkis[5] thame waa." *

[1] Streams.
[2] Sough.
[3] Worry.
[4] Swine, boars.
[5] Work.

The chase was at its highest, and the joy of the day seemed to reach its zenith, when suddenly a shadow fell over all the "pleasoure"—

"The daye waxe als dirke[6]
Als it were mydnyghte mirke,[7]
Ther of Syr Gawane was irke;[8]
And lyghte one his fote."

[6] Dark.
[7] Black, dark.
[8] Troubled.

The party was scattered:—

"Thay ranne faste to the roches,[9] for reddoure[10] of the rayne,
For the slete[11] and the snaw that snappede[12] thame so snelle."[13]

[9] Rocks.
[10] Hardness, rigour.
[11] Sleet.
[12] Nipped.
[13] Keenly.

Suddenly, in the midst of this blackness of eclipse, a ghostly figure appeared gliding from the hill towards the terrified Gaynour—the Queen—as if born of the unearthly darkness:—

"Thare come a lowe[14] one the loughe,[15] in lede[16] es noghte to layne,[17]
In the lykenes of Lucyfere, layethlieste[18] in helle,

[14] Flame.
[15] Hill.
[16] Man.
[17] To conceal—that is, it is not in man to conceal it.
[18] Loathliest.

* St. v.

And glyddis[1] to dame Gaynoure, the gatis fulle gayne,[2]
Yollande[3] yamyrly,[4] withe mony lowde yelle;[5]
It yellede, it yamede[6] withe vengeance fulle wete;[7]
And saide, ofte sighande fulle sare,
'I ame the body that the bare,
Allas! now kyndyls my kare,
I gloppyne[8] and I grete'!"

The apparition was ghastly enough:—

"Bare was hir body, and blake[9] to the bone,
Alle by-claggede in claye, un-comlyly clede:[10]
It weryit,[11] it wayemettede,[12] lyke a womann,
That nowther[13] one hede[14] ne one hare,[15] hillynge[16] it hade;
It stottyde,[17] it stounede,[18] it stode als a stane,
It marrede, it mournede, it moyssed[19] for made.[20]
Un to that grysely gaste Syr Gaweayne es gane;
He raykede[21] to it one a rase,[22] for he was never rade:[23]
For rade was he never, nowe who that ryghte redys;[24]
One the chefe of the cholle,[25]
A tade pykit one hir polle,[26]
Her eghne[27] ware holkede[28] full holle,[29]
Glowand[30] als gledis."[31]

1 Glides.
2 In the way straight towards.
3 Howling.
4 Lamentably.
5 Many loud yells.
6 For yamerede.
7 Suffering punishment.
8 Wail.
9 Black.
10 Clothed uncomely.
11 Cursed.
12 Waymented, lamented.
13 Neither.
14 Head.
15 Hair.
16 Covering.
17 Stammered—rather stotted, walked in a broken way.
18 Was confounded.
19 Stood fixedly, as out of the senses.
20 Mode, mind.
21 Proceeded.
22 Mound, height.
23 Afraid.
24 Tells.
25 Jowl, jaws.
26 Head.
27 Eyes.
28 Dug out.
29 Hollow.
30 Glowing.
31 Burning embers.

After an interview of warning to the Queen, her daughter, and lamentation over her own condition, to be avoided on the part of the living by chastity, pity, and good deeds, and to be ameliorated, so far as she was concerned, by masses said for her soul, the apparition vanished, and with her disappearance came the return of the sunlight:—

"With a grisly grete, the gooste a-wey glides,
And goes with groning sore, thorgh the greves[1] grene;
The wynde, and the wedyrs, thanne welkene in-hydis;
Thanne unclosede the clowddis, the sonne schane schene.[2]
The kynge his bogille[3] hase blowene, and on the bent bydis.[4]" *

[1] Groves.
[2] Shone bright.
[3] Bugle.
[4] Stays.

The apparition, born of the sudden and awesome darkness of the eclipse, passes away with the blitheness of the returning sunlight, as indeed many a ghost has since done. But there is here the germ of that subtle poetic insight which has won its highest successes through the fusion of the natural and the supernatural.

* St. xxvi.

In the following stanza from 'Golagros and Gawane,' we have a picture which fits the uplands of the south of Scotland as faithfully now as it might have done four hundred and fifty years ago:—

"The king faris,[1] with his folk, our firthis[2] and fellis,[3]
Feil[4] dais[5] or he fand[6] of flynd[7] or of fyre;
Bot[8] deip dalis bedene,[9] dounis and dellis,
Montains and marresse,[10] with mony rank myre;[11]
Birkin bewis[12] about, boggis and wellis,
Withoutin beilding[13] of blis, of bern,[14] or of byre;[15]
Bot torris,[16] and tene wais,[17] teirfull quha tellis.
Tuglit[18] and travailt thus trew men can tyre,
Sa wundir wait[19] wes the wa, wit ye but wene,[20]
And all thair vittalis war gone
That thay weildit[21] in wone;[22]
Resset[23] couth[24] thai find none,
That suld thair bute[25] bene."[26] *

1 Journeys.
2 Enclosed woods or lands.
3 Hills, upland moors.
4 Many.
5 Days.
6 Found.
7 Flint.
8 Unless.
9 In succession.
10 Marsh.
11 Soft boggy land.
12 Birchen boughs.
13 Shelter.
14 Barn.
15 Shed, cowhouse.
16 High rocks, hence our towers.
17 Ways difficult of passage.
18 Impeded, taigled.
19 Wet.
20 You may know without thinking; or it goes without saying.
21 Possessed.
22 Power.
23 Abode.
24 Could.
25 Safety, salvation.
26 Be.

Sir F. Madden has remarked of the tale of 'Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knyght,' that

* St. iii.

"the descriptions of the change of the seasons, the bitter aspect of winter, are equal to any similar passages in Douglas or Spenser."* The descriptions in this poem are certainly of a higher type than anything we find in the other two poems of the same class and epoch. But the feeling for nature is not so bold or so varied in its range as in the later national poets, from Henryson to Lyndsay. It is rather, as yet, but secondary and illustrative: the poet does not pause on the scenes of outward nature, as he does on the equipment of knight and lady, embattled tower and town, and the incident of combat, or the progress and ending of love affairs. But there is clear evidence, especially in the 'Grene Knyght,' of the rising above mere organic feeling, or pleasure simply in the open air, to the æsthetical delight in the sights and sounds of nature, and even the combination of the features of the outward world, into pictures characterised by an imaginative unity. We have here some of the wild flowers of the spring of our poetry; the summer, with its richer and more varied colouring, is to come.

We have, however, another existing romance

* *Syr Gawayn*, pp. 301, 302. 1839.

due to a Scottish poet, of probably a somewhat later date than those already referred to.

'The Romans of Lancelot of the Laik,' of the Arthurian cycle, was originally written in the Northern or Scottish dialect, somewhere between 1490 and 1500. Lancelot was the son of Ban of Benoyc, King of Albanach (Alban). Claudas, King of Scotland, took the castle of Trebes, the last stronghold of Ban, whereupon the king, his wife Helaine, and son repair to the Court of Arthur. The language of the MS. has been a good deal mixed with southern and middle forms.* As usual in the Romances, in the opening lines of Prologue and Books there are short descriptions of the season of the year. These are general in their references, though not without spirited lines, and illustrate the earliest form of sympathy for nature, already referred to. There is also the description of the conventional garden, characteristic of the period, and even of later Scottish poetry nearly all down its course.

In the first seventy lines of the Prologue, indeed, the author has evidently set before him Chaucer as his model. They are a reproduction,

* See Professor Skeat's *Introduction*, 1885.

in a measure, of the descriptive passages in 'The Flower and Leaf,' and 'The Complaynt of the Black Knight.'*

The Prologue of the poem opens as follows :—

"The soft morow[1] ande the lustee[2] Aperill,
The wynter set, the stormys in exill,[3]
Quhen that the brycht and fresch illumynare[4]
Uprisith arly[5] in his fyre chare[6]
His hot courss into the orient,
And frome his spere[7] his goldine stremis sent[8]
Wpone[9] the grond, in maner off mesag,[10]
One every thing to valkyne[11] thar curage,
That natur haith set under hire mycht,
Boith gyrss,[12] and flour, and every lusty wicht;[13]
And namly[14] thame that felith[15] the assay[16]
Of lufe, to schew the Kalendis of May,
Throw birdis songe with opine[17] vox[18] one[19] hy,
That sessit[20] not on luvaris for to cry." †

1 Morning.
2 Pleasant.
3 Exile.
4 Sun.
5 Early.
6 Fiery chair.
7 Sphere.
8 Sendeth.
9 Upon.
10 Message.
11 Waken.
12 Grass.
13 Pleasant creature.
14 Especially.
15 For feelis, plural—feel.
16 Assault.
17 Open.
18 Voice.
19 On.
20 Ceased.

* Cf. Skeat, *Preface*, p. xvii. But if, as is now maintained, 'The Flower and Leaf' is not Chaucer's at all, but much later—about the middle of the 15th century—the Romance may be the original; or both may come, as is more likely, from a common source. 'The Complaynt of the Black Knight,' or 'Complaynt of a Lover's Life,' is now known to be Lydgate's.—See Skeat, *Chaucer's Works*, vol. i. p. 9.

† Skeat's ed., *Prologue, et seq.*

Again :—

"The brycht sone illumynit haith[1] the spray,
The nychtis sober[2] and the most[3] schouris
As cristall terys withhang[4] vpone the flouris,
Haith vpwarpith[5] in the lusty aire.[6]
The morow maketh soft, amene, and faire;
And the byrdis thar mychty voce[7] out-throng,[8]
Quhile al the wood resonite[9] of thar songe,
That gret confort till ony wicht it wer
That plessith thame of lusteness to here—
Bot gladness til the thochtful, aver mo,[10]
The more he seith,[11] the more he haith of wo."*

1 Had.
2 Soft.
3 Moist.
4 Uphung, for past participle.
5 Had up-drawn.
6 Pleasant air.
7 Voice.
8 Press forth, express—AS. *ût*, out; *thringan*, to press.
9 Resounded.
10 Evermore.
11 Sees.

In the openings of Books I. and III. there are similar references, and in the same tone.

Speaking of the covering of the trees in early summer, the romancer has a fine touch when he says :—

"The birdis may them hiding[12] in the grawis[13]
Wel from the halk,[14] that oft there lyf[15] berevis;
And Scilla[16] hie ascending in the ayre,
That every wight may heryng[17] hir declar
Of the sessone the passing lustines."[18] †

12 Hide, for hidden—inf.
13 Groves.
14 Hawk.
15 Life.
16 Also called Ciris, l. 2483.
17 Hear.
18 Delightfulness.

The Lady of the Lake, who figures in the poem as the captor of Lancelot in his youth,

* *Prologue*, p. 3. † Book III., p 73.

suggests for us a later romance, and there are touches somewhat in the manner of Scott himself. When, freed for the nonce from his captivity to the Lady of Melyhalt, Lancelot rides forth on his red courser, and with red shield and spear furnished by this Lady, towards the field of combat, his joy of heart is increased by the brightness and the freedom of the scene. He halts on his way by the side of a river, and—

"This knycht, the wich[1] that lang haith ben in cag,[2]
He grew in to o fresch and new curage,
Seing the morow, blythfull and amen,[3]
The med, the river, and the wodis gren,
The knychtis in armys them arrayinge,
The baneris againe[4] the field displaying,
His youth in strenth and in prosperytee,
And syne of lust the gret adversytee."[5] *

[1] Which.
[2] Cage, captivity.
[3] Amene, pleasant.
[4] Against.
[5] And then of pleasure the great repression.

The romance of 'Eger and Grime' has admittedly distinct claims to a northern, even Scottish, authorship. It is not a part of the Arthurian cycle; it is in language and in sentiment more modern than any of those already referred to. Bishop Percy held it to be "one

* Book I., l. 907, p. 30.

of the best of the ancient epic tales," and Mr Furnivall is justified in assigning to it the very highest rank. "It is, indeed, a poem of very high excellence, vivid, picturesque, terse, delicate, tender, vigorous. It breathes the very spirit of romance, and re-creates for us the old sights and scenes of romantic life in all their strange grotesque beauty. The knight-errant in his pride and in his fall; the forbidden land with its weird lord; the castle standing out in the moonshine, as the broken knight rides away from the field of his shame; the scarlet-clad, gold-head-dressed lady, who meets, and greets, and doctors, and nurses him; the wilderness and the forest; the wonderful sword Ege-king, of whose 'grinder'

'No man ever of woman born durst abide the face beforn';—

. . . these are some of the pictures that our romance gives us; that teach us how unlike and how like we are to the men who played their parts some five centuries ago on the stage we are now occupying."*

The romance is a tale of friendship between

* *Eger and Grime*, Preface, p. 17.

the two knights, Sir Eger and Sir Grime, and its burden is the story of how the latter stood by the former in his adversity, succoured him, and successfully accomplished for him his life's desire. The figure of Sir Gray Steele occupies a prominent place in it. Gray Steele, as an object of mythical interest, was well known in Scotland—at Court and among the people—as early at least as the time of James IV., and down through the reign of James V., at the date of 'The Complaynt of Scotland' (1549), and even later. In 1681 there is a description of the library of a Scotsman :—

"And here lyes books, and there lyes ballads,
As Davie Lindsay and Gray Steel,
Squire Meldrum, Bevis, and Adam Bell,
There Bruce and Wallace."*

The scene of the romance appears to be laid in Carrick—at least we have Sir Grime as Lord of Garwicke or Garnwicke. Eger, Egar, or Edgar is an old name of the Merse. We have also, in the Border counties, Edgarshope and Edgerstoun; and, above all, we have the Lord of

* Scot's *Hudibras*. London: 1681. Quoted by Mr Furnivall, p. 8.

Attelstone, Attelston, in the modern Eddlestone, originally Athelstan or Athelstoun. Kay of Kaynes is evidently of Kathnes, Caithness. The Kingdom of Beame, the Earls of Bragas, Gares, are not so easily traceable. Gray-Steele's land,—the forbidden land—an island made by a river and the sea,—might be any Western Highland peninsula.

In diction, the poem is evidently of the Northern dialect, but the MS. we have of it is the work of a Southern transcriber, and we have thus an intermixture of non-Northern forms.

The romance turns entirely on incident, and only once does the poet pause deliberately to describe the landscape. The time is early morning, when Sir Grime rides from the castle of his friend, the daughter of Earl Gares :—

"Early in that May morning,
Merrely[1] when the burds can sing,[2]
The throstle-cocke,[3] the nightingale,
The laveracke,[4] and the wild woodhall,[5]
The rookes[6] risen in every river,
The birds made a blissfull bere ;[7]

[1] Merrily.
[2] Did sing.*
[3] Either thrush or merle.
[4] Lark.
[5] Also *wodewale*, woodpecker.†
[6] Probably mists.‡
[7] Sound.

* *Can, con, gan,* with infinitive equivalent to past tense.

† See note above, p. 124.

‡ This may be *rak, rouk, mist ;* or *hroc* and *rook,* trans-

It was a heavenly Melodye
Pro a knight that did a lover bee,
On the one side, to hear the small birds singing,
On the other side, the flowers springing.
Then drew forth of the dales the dun deere,
The sun it shone both fresh and cleere,
Phebus gott up with his golden beames,
Ouer all the land soe light it gleames;
Hee looked upon the other side,
See parkes and palaces of mickle[1] pryde,
With seven townes by the salt sea,
With castles fayre and towers hyee.
Ouer the river were ryding places two,
And soone Grime chose to the one of tho;[2]
And then he would no longer abyde,
But into Gray-Steele's land can he ryde."[3] *

[1] Much.
[2] Those.
[3] Did he ride.

'Eger and Grime' is, however, remarkable for the vividness of its local picturing by the way. Indeed in none of the Romances is this more marked. We are constantly reminded in this respect of the actual presence of the scene, so characteristic of Scott. Thus the young Sir Eger rides forth in search of daring adven-

lated *graculus*, which is given as *jay* and also *jackdaw*. See *Promptorium Parvulorum* (1440).

* L. 919 *et seq.*

ture, seeking to meet the Lord of the Forbidden Land:—

"I had heard tell of a venterous[1] knight
That kept a fforbidden countrye bath day and night,
And a fresh iland[2] by the sea,
Where castles were with towers hye,[3]
Ouer the river were ryding frythes[4] two,
And soone I chose to the one of tho;
In short while had I rydden
In that land that was forbidden,
But I heard moving in the greete,[5]
As itt had beene of a steeds feete.[6]
My horsse gladedd[7] with that cheere,
Cust[8] up his head and was a steere,[9]
He groped[10] together as he wold have runen.[11]
I hearkned when more din had comen;[12]
I looked on the way nye before,[13]
And see a knight come on a sowre;[14]
Red was his sheild, red was his speare,
And all of fresh gold shone his geere."[15] *

1 Venturesome.
2 Island.
3 High.
4 Fords.
5 Gravel by a river.
6 Feet.
7 Gladdened.
8 Cast.
9 Astir, moving briskly.
10 Drew together, as in a knot or heap,—grouped.
11 Run.
12 Expecting more sound to come.
13 Nigh, close in front.
14 Sorrel-coloured horse.
15 Gear, clothing.

This is a highly finished picture. It illustrates the principle of gradual disclosure in description

* *Eger and Grime*, l. 101 *et seq.*

in a way worthy of the best art. The crossing of the ford; the anxious riding for a short space; the vague sounds as of a steed's feet on the gravel still unseen; the pricking up of the rider's own horse, and anticipation of the fray; the growing definiteness and volume of the sound; and the sudden emergence into light of the knight mounted on his sorrel, red-shielded, red-speared, and flashing in golden sheen, form a complete picture, perfectly limned.

There is a fierce and fell combat, powerfully told. Sir Eger is badly wounded, dismounted, and defeated. His steed is slain. After having lain for some time unconscious, he recovers, finds another horse, and makes his way from the scene of the fight:—

"All that day did I ryde
Till itt was in the even tide;
The moone shone fayre, the starres cast light;
Then of a castle I gott a sight,
Of a castle and of a towne,
And by an arbour side I light downe;
And there I saw fast me by
The fairest bower that ever saw I.
A little while I tarryed there,
And a lady came forth of a fresh arbor;

Shee came forth of that garden greene,
And in that bower faine would [I] have beene.
Shee was cladd in scarlett redd,
And all of fresh gold shone her heade,
Her rud [1] was red as rose in raine,*
A fairer creature was never seene.
Me-thought her coming did me good,
And straight upon my feete I stoode." †

[1] Countenance, glow of complexion.

This is exquisite in feeling and in touch. It makes one long for the return, if only once in a lifetime, of a day of old romance.

'The Prophycie of Merlin' in the Auchinleck MS., which forms the introduction to 'Arthour and Merlin,' contains several descriptive passages of the simplest type, yet very true and pleasing. These are generally prefixed to the different episodes. Thus:—

"Mirie time is Averille,[2]
Than scheweth michel [3] of our wille;
In feld [4] and mede floures springeth;
In grene wode, foules singeth;

[2] April.
[3] Much.
[4] Field.

* "As any rose her rude was red."—*Christ's Kirk of the Grene.*

† L. 203 *et seq.*

Young man wereth [1] jolif,[2]
And than proudeth [3] man and wiif." *

"Mirie is thentre [4] of May,
The foules make mirri play,
Maidens singgeth and maketh play,
The time is hot and long the day;
The jolif nightingale singeth,
In the grene mede foules [5] springeth." †

"Listeneth now fele and fewe,[6]
In May the soune [7] felleth [8] dewe;
The day is miri and draweth along;
The lark arereth [9] her song;
To mede goth this damisele,
And fair floures gadreth fele." [10] ‡

"Miri time it is in May,
Than wexeth alang [11] the day;
Floures schewen her [12] borioun; [13]
Miri it is in feld and toun;
Foules miri in wode gredeth; [14]
Damisels carols ledeth." [15] §

"Mirie it is in time of June,
When fenel [16] || hongeth [17] abrod in toun;

1 Wears, grows.
2 Jolly, happy.
3 Grow elate.
4 Entrance, coming.
5 Probably for floures.
6 Many and few.
7 Sun.
8 Causes to fall.
9 Uprears.
10 Gathereth many.
11 Groweth long.
12 Their.
13 Burgeon.
14 Cry; A.S. *græedan*.
15 Lead.
16 Fennel, also fenkel, synkil.
17 Hangs.

* *Arthour and Merlin*, p. 11. Abbotsford Club, 1838.
† Ibid., p. 174. ‡ Ibid., p. 244. § Ibid., p. 65.
‖ Fennel had numerous virtues—especially those of restoring youth and eyesight.

Violet and rose flour
Woneth [1] than in maidens bour.
The sone is hot, the day is long;
Fouleth make miri song." *

[1] Won, or dry.

Again :—

"Mirie is June that scheweth flour;
The meden bene [2] of sweet odour;
Lilye and rose of fair colour;
The river cler withouten sour; [3]
Bothe knightes and vavasour, [4]
This damisels love paramour." †

[2] Meads are.
[3] Shower.
[4] One next to a baron.

"In time of Winter alange it is;
The foules lesen her [5] bliss;
The leves fallen of the tre;
Rein alangeth the cuntre;
Maidens leseth here hewe;
Ac ever hye lonieth [6] that be trewe." ‡

[5] Lose their.
[6] But ever they change.

This romance, like several others during those early centuries, was one common to the people of Scotland and England alike. §

These extracts fully represent the primitive

* *Arthour and Merlin*, p. 114.
† See Leyden, *Complaynt of Scotland*, p. 320.
‡ Ibid., p. 156. § Ibid., pp. 222, 223.

form of feeling for nature—the delight in spring, the birds, the flowers, the growing light, the lengthening day, and the repulsion to the long winter, with the absence of the birds' song, its leaflessness and lack of joy.

CHAPTER V.

THE NATIONAL EPICS: JOHN BARBOUR, HENRY THE MINSTREL, ANDREW OF WYNTOUN.

(1375 TO 1424.)

THE first great poem in that branch of the Teutonic language which, with strong affinities to the diction of Chaucer, is yet the parent of what is distinctively the Scottish language of Dunbar, Douglas, and Lyndsay, and of what survived of it in Ramsay and Burns, is 'The Bruce' of John Barbour, Archdeacon of Aberdeen. 'The Bruce' is not only Scottish in language; it is so in subject, feeling, and treatment. It has for its theme the struggles of Robert Bruce for the crown of Scotland, his triumph, his reign, and death. It traces the story from the slaughter of Comyn to the death

of Bruce in 1326. The twentieth and last Book narrates the story of Douglas and his baffled mission with the heart of the king to the Holy Land.

Barbour was, it is supposed, born in 1316. Other dates are given, varying even from this year to 1320, 1326, 1330. He was appointed Archdeacon of Aberdeen in 1356 (David II.), and he died at an advanced age in 1396. He was thus in a great measure contemporary with Chaucer. He is said to have finished his poem of 'The Bruce' in 1375. We have a few interesting glimpses of his life in the record of a safe-conduct granted to him in 1357 to journey to Oxford, another to the same place in 1364, another to England and France in 1365, and another to the same in 1368. These journeys were probably undertaken for the purpose of study and the consultation of books. The writing of 'The Bruce' extended over the reigns of David II. and Robert II. Of 'The Bruce' two manuscripts are known—the one in the Advocates' Library, written in 1489 by John Ramsay. From this Pinkerton in 1790, and subsequently Jamieson in 1820, published editions of the poem. The other manuscript, written in 1487, is in St John's College Library, Cam-

bridge. This has been edited for the English Text Society by the Rev. W. W. Skeat.

The poem of 'The Bruce' shows its author's pith of sense and power of worth. Its delineation of the twenty-four years' struggle and triumph of Bruce is remarkable for its sympathy with high motives, its intense patriotism, and withal its moderation in tone, quite consistent with an underlying intensity of feeling. Nor is it less remarkable for its touches of tenderness, its human yearnings, sometimes dashed, no doubt, with a grim Homeric literalism in the description of slaughter, and its picturesqueness in the exhibition of incident.* There was the patriot's heart in Barbour. When he narrates how the young Douglas rode out from St Andrews alone to cast in his lot with the struggling Bruce, the poet's heart swells, and he suddenly exclaims—

"Der[1] God, that is of hevyn King!
Sawff him,[2] and scheld[3] him frae his fayes!"[4] †

[1] Dear.
[2] Save him.
[3] Shield.
[4] Foes.

The meeting of the Earl of Lennox with the king in the wilds of Loch Lomond is patheti-

* See, for example, the description of the slaughter of Bohun, Book XIV., 25 *et seq.*

† *The Bruce*, Skeat's edition, vol. ii. p. 144.

cally given. There were tears of joy on both sides:—

"Bot for pitë, I trow, gretyng[1]
Be na thing bot ane opynnyng[2]
Off hart, that schawis the tendirnys
Off rewth[3] that in it closyt[4] is."*

[1] Weeping.
[2] Opening.
[3] Ruth.
[4] Closed.

The references to outward nature and the scenery of the incidents are not numerous. The poet seldom pauses to take in the scene, though he frequently stops to moralise, or refer to some hero of antiquity parallel to the one he describes. Winter he uniformly passes over with anything but a loving reference, as was to be expected when his hero was out on the wilds in that "snell season."† And he does not, as Scott has done since, tarry by the way to tell us what might be seen on the road,—and so gather up the man, his action, and its surroundings in one. But he has references—loving references—to the softer side of nature,—to the spring and the month of May; and these are generally characterised by great truthfulness of description,—written, as it were, from sight, and at first hand,

* *The Bruce*, vol. iii. p. 531.

† See reference to Winter, Book III., 373 *et seq.*

and seldom showing borrowed conventional terms, inapplicable to the reality before him.

The following shows the vividness of the poet's descriptive power in general:—

"Osbarn went to the meikle hall
That then with corn wes fillit all,"

with "a culter hat glowand," [1] and set it high in "a mow." [2] Then shortly

"fyre all cler [3]
Soyn [4] throu the thik burd can appeir,[5]
Ferst as a stern,[6] syne [7] as a moyne,[8]
And wele bradar [9] thareefter soyne,
The fyre out syne in blasis brast,[10]
And the reik [11] raise rycht wounder fast.[12]
The fyre our all the castell spred,
Thar mycht no forrs [13] of men it red." [14] *

1 Hot, glowing.
2 Heap of corn.
3 Fire all clear.
4 Soon.
5 Did appear.
6 Star.
7 Then.
8 Moon.
9 Much broader.
10 In blazes burst.
11 Smoke.
12 Wonderfully fast.
13 Force.
14 Save—AS. *hreddan*, to rid, deliver; G. *retten*, to save.

Note the accurate but bare literalism of the following. The king is pursued by John of Lorne, and passes into a wood:—

"The kyng toward the wod [15] is gane,
Wery [16] for-swat,[17] and vill [18] off vayn; [19]
Intill the wod soyn enterit he;
And held doun toward a vale,

15 Wood.
16 Wearily.
17 Covered with sweat.
18 and 19 Bewildered in thought.

* *The Bruce*, Book IV., 125 *et seq.*

Quhar[1] throu the wod a wattir ran.
Thiddir[2] in gret hy[3] went he than,
And begouth[4] to rest him thair,
And said he mycht no forthirmar."[5] *

[1] Where.
[2] Thither.
[3] Haste.
[4] Began.
[5] Was able to go no further.

The king is at the head of the Tay, and on the Grampians,—often in sore straits for food. He travels thence and crosses Loch Lomond in a small rickety boat, which holds but three at a time. There is no reference to any aspect of the scenery. So far as this is concerned, the narrative is in the baldest prose. A comparison between the handling of Barbour and that in 'The Lady of the Lake' shows all the difference between the two conditions of art,—the one in which the earnestness of the strictest realism predominated — the feeling that the action was the true and essential thing in its national bearings; and that in which the modern artist could, after the union of the crowns, look back in the quiet retrospect of memory, and take in all the accidents of scenery as of equal interest with the main action. With the earlier poet there was the stern sense of reality, and its absorbing interest;

* Book VII., 1.

with the later, there was the comparative abstraction from this, and the soft and mellow idealising which is the characteristic of the historical imagination.

William Bunnock, a farmer,—"a stout carle and a sture,"—planned a way of taking Linlithgow Peel from the tyrannous English garrison. He was to drive his "wayne" into the fort, as if taking hay as usual; while, concealed under the hay, lay eight armed men, who were to surprise the garrison.

"This wes[1] in-till the harvist tyde,
Quhen feldis, that war[2] fair and wyde,[3]
Chargit with corne assouerit[4] war;
For sindri cornys that thai bair
Woxe rype to wyn,[5] to mannys fude,
And the treis all sammyn[6] stude
Chargit with froytis, on syndri viss.[7]
That sammyn time, as I deviss,
Thai off the peill[8] had wonnyn[9] hay,
And with this Bunnok spokin had thai
To leid thair hay,[10] for he wes neir;
And he consentyt but dangeir."*

1 Was.
2 Were.
3 Wide.
4 Browned, ripened—Fr. *saur*, brownish-red.
5 To reap, take in, save.
6 Together.
7 Way.
8 Peel, tower.
9 Won, mown, ready for carrying.
10 To lead in.

The king leaves Arran for the shore of

* Book X., 185.

Carrick, with his fleet and three hundred men. The poet tarries a little on the scene :—

" This wes [1] in were,[2] quhen wynter-tyde [3]
With his blastes hydwiss [4] to byde,[5]
Wes ourdriffin ; [6] and byrdis smale,
As thristill [7] and the nychtingale,
Begouth rycht meraly [8] to syng ;
And for to mak in thair synging
Syndry notis, and soundis sere,[9]
And melody plesande to here.
And the treis begouth to ma [10]
Burgeonys [11] and brycht blumys alsua,
To wyn [12] the heling [13] of thar he[ve]de,[14]
That wikkit [15] wyntir had thame reved ; [16]
And all grewis [17] begouth [18] to spryng." *

1 Was.
2 Spring.
3 Winter time.
4 Hideous.
5 Endure.
6 Over-driven, brought to an end, overpast.
7 Throstle, thrush—AS. *throstle.*
8 Merrily.
9 Separate, various.
10 Make.
11 Shoots.
12 To win, regain.
13 Covering.
14 Head—AS. *héafod.*
15 Wicked.
16 Reft.
17 Groves.
18 Began.

We have here, in a native-bred Scottish poet, one of the earliest references to the nightingale. This warbler appears in nearly all the subsequent poets of the country far down the line—especially in Dunbar and Douglas. It is associated, too, in their descriptions with the well-known native birds, such as the merle and the mavis, and many others. It comes into their pictures apparently quite naturally, as if they themselves

* Book V., 1.

had listened to its note mingling with that of the thrush in the quiet of the evening or early morning. Yet we know that nowadays the nightingale does not come north of the Tweed, or even very near it on the south. It would be a bold supposition to make that the nightingale in that far back period frequented Scotland. This would be to conjure up a climatic change on very slight grounds; though no doubt the May of the Scottish poets indicates a flush of sun and glow of summer such as we seldom experience in that east-wind month in these days. But it is safer, on the whole, to imagine that the nightingale was borrowed by our poets from Chaucer, and from those Romances to which he and they had access, and some of which, while simply translations from the French, have been wrongly attributed to him as author or translator. The other supposition we may make is, that the name nightingale was given to one or other of our Scottish birds which sing at night and early morning—such as the sedge-warbler or the blackcap. In Roxburghshire the sedge-warbler used to be called the Scottish nightingale. But Gawin Douglas obviously had in his mind the proper nightingale, for in these

lines he distinctly refers to the classical myth of Procne and Philomela, the former having been changed into the swallow, the latter into the nightingale, afterwards historic:—

" For Progne had or than [1] sung hir complaynt,
And eik [2] hir dreidful systir Philomene
Hir lais endit, and in woddis grene
Hyd hir selvin,[3] eschamyt of hir chance." [4] *

[1] Before that time.
[2] Also.
[3] Herself alone.
[4] Ashamed of her fate.

Philomene is of course from the Low Latin *philomena*, for *philomela*.

We have another reference to scenery in the poem, when the king goes to the assistance of his brother Edward in Ireland:—

" This wes in the moneth of May,
Quhen byrdis syngis on the spray;
Melland [5] their notys with syndry soune,[6]
For softness of that sweit sesoune;
And lewis on the branchis spredis,
And blomys bricht besyd thame bredis; [7]
And feldis florist [8] ar with flowris,
Weill savourit,[9] of seir [10] colowris,
And all thing worthis [11] blith and gay,
Quhen that this gud king tuk his way." †

[5] Mingling—present participle, as always in Barbour, in *and.* *Mellyne*, noun, medley—the termination here equivalent to modern *ing*.
[6] Sound.
[7] Spread out.
[8] Decked, flourished.
[9] Well scented.
[10] Various—Icel. *sér*, one by one.
[11] Becomes—AS. *weorðan*.

* *Prologue*, *Æneid*, Book XII., Small's edition, iv. p. 89.
† Book XI., 63.

The main interest of 'The Bruce' lies in its story and its characters. Let us note in passing that of the Douglas. The James of Douglas presented to us in the pages of Barbour is as noble a picture as any in history. His father, William of Douglas, the friend of Wallace, had first been thrown into prison by Edward—his estates confiscated and given to Clifford; and then, still in prison, secretly done to death. James, his son and heir, was but a boy, but of remarkable fibre. He brooded in quiet over his father's fate, and the loss of his great estates. There gradually developed in the youth a firmness of resolution, which, once taken, no impediment was allowed to frustrate. To this was joined great caution in the way of selecting opportunity and means, as was afterwards shown on many a hard-fought and unequally contested field:—

"Thair wes nane auentur that mocht
Stunay[1] hys hart, nor ger[2] him let[3]
To do the thing he wes on set;
For he thocht ay encrely[4]
To do his deid awysily."[5] *

[1] Stun, astound.
[2] Cause.
[3] Pause.
[4] Especially, carefully.
[5] Considerately.

* Book I., 298.

These qualities made him an ally of the struggling Bruce, absolutely needed and indispensable in the circumstances. Dashing, daring, heroic in the highest degree, he could afford to counsel caution and retreat, on occasions of unequal conflict. The very name of the "Black Douglas," as Barbour tells us, made the flesh of the English sentinel creep on his bones, and after his death it was a word of fear with which mothers hushed their children. But its possessor was withal one of the most self-sacrificing, considerate of captains—as, for example, when after the daring night attack on the English camp he stood "hinmost" at the ford until all his men were over and safe, and he alone in peril. Open-hearted, bounteous, "wise, courteous, and debonnair," and the soul of loyalty and honour,—

"Quhen he was blyth, he was lufly,[1]
And meyk[2] and sweyt[3] in cumpany;
Bot quha in battail mycht him se,[4]
All othir contenance[5] had he,"—

[1] Lovely.
[2] Meek.
[3] Sweet.
[4] See.
[5] Countenance.

James of Douglas was the idol of his followers, the object of their affection and the inspirer of their valour. That grey-visaged figure with the dark hair, broad-shouldered, well-limbed,

"wycht" and well made, around whom there has grown mythic story, and in it the outcome of the Scottish patriot heart, was certainly in truth of fact one of the noblest characters of the age of chivalry—

"his hart on high honour set."

He was one whom a sense of patriotism, quickened no doubt by the memory of family wrongs, impelled to do the greatest possible service in achieving the independence of Scotland. Wholly a creation of the poet he is not. But even the sympathy which Barbour shows for such a character, and his love in its delineation, give evidence of a keen and elevating appreciation at once of the daring and the wise in action, and of the good, the true, the honourable in active life and patriotic enterprise.

'The Actis and Deidis of the Illustre and Vailyeand Campion, Schir William Wallace, Knycht of Ellerslee,' is the next Scottish epic.

Of Wallace, Joanna Baillie sings:—

"A fair renown, as years wear on,
Shall Scotland give her noblest son:
The course of ages shall not dim
The love that she shall bear to him."

'The Wallace,' by Blind Harry, or Henry the Minstrel, has been with probability referred to the date of 1460. But, as has been remarked, in language and style it has more affinities with earlier Scottish writings, such as 'The Bruce' of Barbour, than with the poem nearer it in time — viz., 'The King's Quair.' The dates of the birth and death of Henry are conjecturally given as 1420-1493. Henry was of peasant origin. He says—

"It is weill knawn I am a burel[1] man." [1] Rustic.

There is a question about the sources of his 'Life of Wallace.' The probability is that it was founded, partly at least, on a Latin composition of John Blair relating to the same subject, and that the Minstrel himself added what he had learnt from tradition—in fact, the current stories of the firesides of the peasantry of Scotland of his day. He seems to have travelled about the country, carrying his rhymes in his memory as his stock-in-trade, reciting them by lowly hearth and in lordly hall, and touching with his own patriotic flame the hearts of all ranks of his countrymen. And we ought to remember that, near our own time, it was the perusal of the

paraphrase of Blind Harry made by Hamilton of Gilbertfield, in the modern Scottish tongue, that touched with fire the early genius of Burns.

Let the critical modern historian dissect and reject as he may the stories here and there interposed in the narrative of Blind Harry, it shows but a purblind imagination not to realise the effect of these, and of the whole record implicitly received, on the hearts, the impulses, and the bent of character of the Scottish people, all through the centuries down to the union of the crowns — an influence which nerved and steeled them to self-defence and the hold of national independence, and which is even now manifest in the strong fibre and upright self-respect of the national character.

The blind Minstrel's only means of subsistence seems to have been the voluntary gifts of his patrons, high and low. Occasionally in his later years he received the dole of a few shillings from the Royal Treasury. He was thus truly a wandering minstrel—blind, aged, and poor. About the time when the race of them was nearly dead—and we may look on 'The Life of Wallace' as the actual Lay of 'the Last Minstrel'—Major tells us that Harry had access

to the highest personages in the land; and thus it was that Scott, in making his aged harper draw near the stately tower of Newark, and pass, though with trembling steps, the embattled portal arch, to be received with a kindly welcome, was but imaginatively repeating the actual experience of the last of the accredited Scottish minstrels. Doubtless it was often literally true of the blind Minstrel as of Scott's harper that—

> "when he caught the measure wild,
> The old man raised his face and smiled,
> And lighten'd up his faded eye,
> With all a poet's ecstasy.
> In varying cadence, soft or strong,
> He swept the sounding chords along;
> The present scene, the future lot,
> His toils, his wants, were all forgot;
> Cold diffidence and age's frost
> In the full tide of song were lost.
> Each blank in faithless memory void,
> The poet's glowing thought supplied." *

In the writings of one born blind, as is alleged of Harry the Minstrel, we should hardly expect

* *Lay of the Last Minstrel*—Introd.

references—especially rather frequent references —to outward nature. But so it is. The minstrel pauses in the course of his narrative on the aspects of Morning, Spring, and Autumn. There is allusion to colour, the fresh greenery which the blind eye could never see or know; to the breath, the breeze of morning, which no doubt he might feel; and to the notes of the birds, which he might clearly and lovingly hear. There is reference in the Autumn stanzas to the leaves that

"had lost their colouris of plesence."

Not having now "the Latin Buk" to which he refers, we cannot tell how much is a mere transcript or repetition of what was there. But John Blair, the chaplain of Wallace, was little likely, in the midst of the hurry of incidents, to pause on the aspects of outward nature. He would be sufficiently occupied in noting events as they occurred. In all probability the descriptions of nature are the wandering minstrel's own. Who more likely than he, in his travels over the country, to pause and note the time and scenes of the incidents which he had committed to verse and memory? Who had more abun-

dant or suggestive leisure? The descriptions are certainly such as one not always blind might have written, and we may well suppose that the epithet of blind from birth is really one of those exaggerations which popular judgment is ready to entertain, in order to increase the merit of the admired hero—be he poetic or other. There is an exceeding improbability in a man of peasant origin in those times rising to high eminence in any art—especially poetry—who suffered from birth from the affection of blindness. Tytler did well to doubt the assumption. If this be so,—if the poet once had sight, and lost it in the course of his lifetime,—we can well understand his frequent and fond recurrence to the imagination and picturing of scenes now closed to his darkened vision. Was it not so with Milton?

But, as seems to me, neither the work of Blair nor that of Blind Harry, however much indebted to the former, can be regarded as truly and wholly an original production. 'The Wallace' of the Minstrelsy is a specimen simply of the combination into epic form of a floating series of ballads which had grown up in the country from the death of Wallace to the time of

the Minstrel himself—that is, during a period of one hundred and fifty-four years (1306-1460). The literary genesis is simply that of the 'Niebelungenlied,' the 'Cid Romances,' the 'Carlovingian Romances,'—a compilation of earlier ballads, and a fusion into a unity of narrative. In 'The Wallace' there is probably a larger element of truth than in any of those mentioned—both from the comparatively near period of the occurrence of the events, and, as appears, from the confirmation of other records; but this mode of composition might, in some measure, explain the references to outward nature which occur in the poem, even supposing what Major says is true, that the Minstrel himself was blind from his birth.

The references to nature in 'The Wallace' of the Minstrel are, as a rule, given in the opening lines of the several books—eleven—of which the epic is composed. They are interesting as among the earliest attempts to depict Scottish scenery. They do not take a high level, either in their substance as to æsthetical feeling, or in their execution as to artistic management. But they have, as a rule, the merit of simplicity; and they set before us nature as it appeared in

the course of the year to one living in the very dawn of our language and literature :—

"In Aperill the one and twenty day,
The hie calend, thus Cancer, as we say,
The lusty[1] tym off Mayus fresche cummyng,[2]
Celestiall gret blythnes in to bryng;
Pryncypaill moneth forsuth it may be seyn,
The hevynly hewis apon the tendyr greyn,
Quhen old Saturn his cloudy cours had gon,
The quhilk had beyn bath best[3] and birdis bon:[4]
Zepherus ek,[5] with his suet vapour,
He comfort has, be wyrking[6] of natour,
All fructuous thing in till the erd[7] adoun,
At[8] rewllyt[9] is wndyr[10] the hie regioun;
Sobyr[11] Luna, in flowyng off the se,
Quhen brycht Phebus is in his chemagè,[12]
The Bulys cours[13] so taken had his place,
And Jupiter was in the Crabbis face:
. . . . . .
And fresch Flora her floury mantill spreid,
In every vaill,[14] bath hop,[15] hycht,[16] hill, and meide." *

1 Pleasant.
2 Coming.
3 Beast.
4 Bane.
5 Also.
6 Working.
7 Earth.
8 That.
9 Ruled.
10 Under.
11 Soft—as in 'Lancelot of the Laik.'
12 Perhaps *chemes hie*—that is, high dwelling.
13 The Bull's course.
14 Vale.
15 Hope.
16 Height.

* *Wallace*, Book IX. l. 1 *et seq.*

This is not much of a picture,—rather a catalogue of the constellations and their supposed influences,—vague and general without specific features. The following are more precise and vivid:—

"In Aperill quhen cleithit[1] is, but weyne,[2]
The abill[3] grounde be wyrking[4] off natur,
And woddis[5] has won thar worthy weid[6] off greyne.
Quhen Nympheus,[7] in beldyn[8] off his bour,[9]
With oyle and balm fullfillit off suet odour,
Faunis[10] materis, as thai war wount to gang,
Walkyn[11] thair cours in every casuall hour,
To glaid the huntar with thair merye sang." *

1 Clothed.
2 Doubtless.
3 Capable.
4 Working.
5 Woods.
6 Garment.
7 The Power of nature.
8 Building.
9 Bower.
10 Perhaps Faun's. Reading doubtful.
11 Awaken.

Again:—

"In joyows Julii, quhen the flouris suete,
Degesteable,[12] engenered[13] throu the heet,
Baith erbe and froyte,[14] busk[15] and bewis,[16] braid
Haboundandlye[17] in every slonk[18] and slaid;[19]
Als[20] bestiall,[21] thar rycht cours till endur,
Weyle helpyt ar be wyrkyn off natur,
On fute[22] and weynge[23] ascendand to the hycht,
Conserved weill be the Makar of mycht;

12 Concocted (?).
13 Engendered.
14 Fruit.
15 Dress.
16 Boughs.
17 Abundantly.
18 Mire.
19 Valley—Icel. *slaed*.
20 Also.
21 Cattle.
22 Foot.
23 Wing.

* *Wallace*, Book VI. l. 11 *et seq.*

Fyscheis[1] in flude[2] refeckit[3] rialye[4]
Till[5] mannys fude,[6] the warld suld occupye.
Bot Scotland sa was waistit mony day,
Throw wer[7] sic skaith,[8] at[9] labour was away.
Wictaill[10] worth[11] scant or[12] August coud apper,
Throu all the land, that fude was hapnyt der.[13]
Bot Inglismen, that richess wantyt nayne,[14]
Be caryage[15] brocht thair wictaill full gude wayne;[16]
Stuffit housis with wyn[17] and gud wernage;[18] *
Demaynde this land as thair awne heretage;
The kynryk haile[19] thai rewllyt at thar will." †

1 Fishes.
2 Flood.
3 Repaired, restored.
4 Royally.
5 For.
6 Man's food.
7 War.
8 Hurt.
9 That.
10 Food, victual.
11 Grew.
12 Before.
13 Fell dear.
14 None.
15 Carriage.
16 Plenty.
17 Wine.
18 White wine—old French, *garnache;* also provision for garrison.
19 Whole kingdom.

There are touches of true feeling for the facts and features of the Scottish land in this picture. The joyous July, with its abundance of flowers, fruit, and leaves; the creatures of the fields and the wilds at their best and happiest during the year, through the kind influence of nature and God; the characteristic touch of their ascending to the height on foot and wing —referring obviously to the sheep and cattle seeking the high pastures, and the birds soaring

* Italian *vernaccia*, supposed to be from Verona, *Veronnaccia.*

† *Wallace*, Book III. l. 1 *et seq.*

in the summer air: all these are fresh and truthful, and worthy of good recognition. But their power of impression is immensely enhanced by the contrast of what the natural season would have done for the country, for help and provision, with the results of the cruel scourge of war which was desolating its plains and valleys—wasting all, stopping labour; and in August, when the harvest time should have come with its ripened blessings, no food to crown the year, whose promise had been ruthlessly trampled down. And yet the coarse invaders and wasters of the land could bring their plenty and their luxury, their wine and wheat, and live rejoicingly in the midst of the starvation, suffering, and desolation which their presence caused. It speaks a hundredfold for the patient and dignified cast of the Scottish character that, even in the day of hardest suffering, such things could be recorded in words so simple, balanced, and moderated.

Then of September:—

[1] Humble.
[2] Sweet.

"In September, the humyll[1] moneth suette,[2]
Quhen passyt by the hicht was off the hette,

[3] Fruit.
[4] Ripened.

Wictaill and froyte[3] are rypyt[4] in aboundance,

[5] Ordains.

As God ordans[5] to mannys governance.

Sagittarius with his aspre[1] bow,
Be the ilk syng[2] weryte[3] ye may know
The changing courss quhilk[4] makis gret defer-
ence;
And levys[5] had lost thair colouris of plesence.
All wardly thing has nocht bot a sesoune;
Both erbe and froyte mon fra hevyn cum
doune." *

[1] Sharp.
[2] The same sign.
[3] Verified.
[4] Which.
[5] Leaves.

Thus he pictures the Morning:—

"The merry day sprang frae the orient,
With beams bright illumëd the occident.
After Titan, Phœbus uprisëd fair,
High in the sphere the signs made declair.[6]
Zepherus began his morrow course,
The sweet vapour thus frae the ground resource;[7]
The humil[8] breath down from the heaven avail,[9]
In every mead, bathe[10] firth,[11] forest, and dail;[12]
The clear rede[13] amang the rockis rang,
Through green branches, where birdis blythely
sang
With joyous voice, in heavenly harmony."

[6] Appeared clearly.
[7] Sprung up. Fr. *resourdre.*
[8] Humble.
[9] Descends.
[10] Bathes.
[11] Enclosed wood.
[12] Dale.
[13] Voice—Icel. *roedd.*

This description, as also those of Spring and Autumn, is general in its character. It contains few specific or characteristic epithets, such as

* *Wallace*, Book IV., 1 *et seq.*

set the scene before us. It is indicative of feeling for the scene, rather than special or intimate grasp. Possibly it was done from long-past memory. Looking at the best which Blind Harry has done, we do not find that he has appreciably risen above the stage of agreeable sensation, and the sense of utility and comfort, which arises from the fruitfulness and nourishing power of nature, as bearing on the physical and general wellbeing of man.

Andrew of Wyntoun completed the 'Orygynale Chronykyl of Scotland' in 1424, the year of the restoration of James I. "Elde"—old age—was then, as he says, sending him very painful "brevis" (letters), admonishing him that the close of life was not far off. *

The following picture from Wyntoun is a typical example of the kind of interest in natural scenery common to early poetry. He is describing Britain:—

"Blessed Bretayne bulde[1] suld be
Of al the ilys[2] in the se;
Quhare flourys are fele[3] on feldys fare,
Hale of hewe, haylsom of ayre,[4]

[1] Bold.
[2] Isles.
[3] Many.
[4] Wholesome in air.

* See Wyntoun in Tytler's *Worthies*, vol. ii. p. 76.

Of al corne there is copy[1] gret,
Pese[2] and ayts,[3] bere,[4] quhet,[5]
Bath fruyt on tre and fysche in flude,
And tyl[6] al cattle pasture gude.

. . . . . .

Thare wylde[7] in wode has welth at wylle,
Thare hyrdis hydys[8] holme and hille,
Thare bewys bowys all for byrtht,[9]
Baith merle and maweys, mellys of myrtht;[10]
Thare huntyng is at alkyne[11] dere,
And ryght gud hawkying on rywere;
Of fysche thaire is habowndance,[12]
And needful thyng to mannys substance."[13] *

[1] Plenty.
[2] Pease.
[3] Oats.
[4] Barley.
[5] Wheat.
[6] To, for.
[7] Wild creatures.
[8] Herds cover.
[9] Boughs bend for bulk.
[10] Mingle in mirth.
[11] All kind.
[12] Abundance.
[13] Man's subsistence.

The central idea here is that of utility and comfortable life. The flowers are noted only to be quickly passed over; and the attention is drawn to the corn, pease, and oats, bere and wheat, fruit, fishes, and good pasture for cattle; then to the sports of the wilds, hunting and hawking—all that is needful for man's being and physical wellbeing. There is merely a glimmering through it all of the pure æsthetical charm which nature wears, in the references to the flowers and the notes of the birds.

* *Chronicle*, i. 13, 14.

CHAPTER VI.

NATIONAL POETS OF THE STUART PERIOD: JAMES I.

(1394 TO 1437.)

THE poem which stands out pre-eminent in Scottish, even in English, literature from Chaucer to near the middle of the fifteenth century, is 'The Kingis Quair' * of James I. of Scotland. In the opinion of the best judges, such as Mr Ellis and others, it is not surpassed in its kind by anything Chaucer himself has written, —whose influence, as the king himself avows, is manifest through its whole tone and structure:—

* *Book*, from Old French *quaier*, probably from Low Latin *quaternum, a collection of four leaves;* modern, *quire*. Quair in fact means the primitive book—that made of the stitching of sheets together.

'Unto [the] Impnis[1] of my maisteris dere, [1] Hymns.
Gowere and Chaucere, that on the steppis satt
Of rhetorike, quhill thai were lyvand here,
Superlative as poetis laureate
Of moralitee and eloquence ornate,
I recommend my buk in lynis seven,
And eke[2] thair saulis un-to the blisse of hevin."* [2] Also.

At the same time 'The Quair' is in no proper sense an imitation. It is inspired by the soul of real, deep passion, and it is expressed in language of unmistakable truth and natural simplicity. As a love-poem—emotional, descriptive, allegorical, and often finely reflective—it occupies the very highest rank.

The career of its author, James I. (1394-1437), was checkered throughout, and tragic in its close. Taken at sea when a boy of eleven, through a grossly dishonourable breach of faith on the part of the English Government and King (Henry IV.), he spent eighteen years of captivity in England. His uncle—the ambitious and unscrupulous Albany—connived at the whole nefarious business, as he had, according to shrewd suspicion, been the moving cause of the murder of the

* S. 197.

young king's elder brother. But the captivity which the poet of 'The Quair' has so pathetically bewailed was not without its personal advantages to the king himself. Obviously his education had been well attended to. Of great natural powers—physical and intellectual—he became accomplished in all the many athletic ways of the age—in archery especially skilful. He studied the philosophy of the time; was an admirer of Boethius, whose fate was somewhat like his own; drank in the spirit of the reflection and poetry of the 'Consolation of Philosophy.' His natural genius for music and poetry was nourished and developed with care; and, amid the best culture of the England of the time, Gower and Chaucer became the moulders of his taste and imagination. The poetry of 'The Quair' can thus not be regarded as a development in the line of purely Scottish taste and æsthetic feeling. It rather exhibits the influence of a comparatively foreign power on a Scotsman of genius educated in England, and knowing, in a limited way certainly, from his eleventh year the aspects of English scenery and the modes of English life. All the same, the poem has a very special interest for us, and

it shows an appreciation of natural scenery and the forms of natural beauty which is characterised by the purest taste and most delicate refinement. There is even occasionally a genuine insight into the spirit of the outward world—the soul of nature—which can be paralleled only by lines in 'The Prelude' of Wordsworth.

'The Quair' reveals to us the whole heart and soul of the captive boy and youth—his repinings and his manly resignation. At first confined in the Tower of London, then in Nottingham Castle, he was at length transferred to Windsor Castle, where he spent the greater part of those long eighteen years, until he was twenty-nine. The point of view of 'The Quair' is thus mainly that of the prisoner who sees outward nature from the narrow window of the Windsor Tower; and if, as Barbour says—

> "contrary things evermore
> Discoverings of the tother are"—

we can well understand how, in contrast to the grey-walled enclosure of his narrow room and its depressing limitations, he would rejoice as he did in the early dawn:—

"The long[ë] dayes and the nightis eke,
I wold bewaille my fortune in this wise,
For quhich, agane[1] distresse confort to seke,
My custum was on mornis for to ryse
Airly as day;—O happy exercise!"—

[1] Against.

and watch from his window

"the warld and folk that went forby;[2]
As for the tyme, though I of myrthis fude[3]
Myght have no more, to luke[4] it did me gude." *

[2] Past.
[3] Mirth's food.
[4] Look.

And much more would such a soul so placed find in the freedom and the rejoicing notes of the birds — he "a thrall, while they go at large" †—in the sheen of spring leaf and waving bough, in the beauty of blossom and the glow of bloom of the English garden beneath his window, what would touch the eye and heart, and quicken in him

"the rush of blood
That throbs through bard in bard-like mood."

This is how he pictures what of landscape he saw from the narrow bole of the Tower of Windsor:—

* Canto i., ss. 10, 11. † Canto ii., s. 19.

"Now was there maid, fast by the touris wall,
A gardyn faire, and in the corneris set
Ane herbere[1] grene, with wandis long and small,
Railit about; and so with treis set
Was all the place, and hawthorn hegis knet[2]
That lyf[3] was none, walking there forby,[4]
That myght within scarse ony wight espy.

So thik the bewis[5] and the leves grene
Beshadit all the aleyes[6] that there were,
And myddis every herbere myght be sene
The sharp[ë], grenë, suetë Ienipere,[7]
Growing so faire with branchis here and there,
That, as it semyt to a lyf[8] without,
The bewis spred the herbere all about;

And on the small[ë] green twistis[9] sat
The lytill suetë nyghtingale, and song
So loud and clere, the ympnis[10] consecrat
Of lufis use, now soft, now loud among,[11]
That all the gardyng and the wallis rong
Ryght of thaire song, and on the copill[12] next
Of thaire suete armony, and lo the text:

'Worschippë ye that loveris bene[13] this May,
For of your blisse the Kalendis[14] are begonne,

[1] Enclosure in garden.
[2] Knitted.
[3] Person, living person.
[4] Past.
[5] Boughs.
[6] Alleys.
[7] Juniper.
[8] Person.
[9] Twigs.
[10] Hymns.
[11] By turns.
[12] Couplet.
[13] Are.
[14] First days.

And sing with us, away, winter, away!
Cum somer, cum, the suete sesoun and sonne!
Awake, for schame! that have your hevynnis[1] wonne,
And amorously lift up your hedis[2] all,
Thank Lufe that list[3] you to his merci call.'

When thai this song had song a lytill thrawe,[4]
Thai stent[5] a quhile, and therewith unaffraid,
As I beheld and kest mine eyne a-lawe,[6]
From beugh to beugh[7] thay hippit[8] and thai plaid,
And freschly in thair birdis kynd arraid
Thaire fetheris new, and fret[9] thame in the sonne,
And thankit Lufe, that had thaire makis[10] wonne." †

[1] Supreme bliss.
[2] Heads.
[3] Was pleased.
[4] Turn.
[5] Left off.
[6] Below.
[7] Bough to bough.
[8] Hopped.
[9] Adorned.
[10] Mates.*

This is painting truthful, natural, heartfelt, at first hand; and the art is of a finished kind. Only a true seer of nature could have written those stanzas. The exultation in the free out-

* "And on the morrow they made them beires,
Of the birk and hazel grey,
And many a widowe with weeping tears
Their makes they fetch away."
—*Ballad of Otterburne.*

† Canto ii., s. 12 *et seq.*

ward life in which he could only imaginatively share, the sympathy with the love at the heart of nature towards which his young pulses throbbed, the rejoicing in the notes of the birds, —all these are characteristic, not only of the satisfying of his own local and personal yearnings, but of the mood of the universal human soul in its attitude towards outward nature.

Further, there is here the forecast of the love-poetry of the country. The love-poems of Scotland are nothing apart from their setting in their appropriate scenery. There is no love-song worthy of the name in all the Scottish songs—and there are none finer in the world of poesy—in which the passion is not associated with the scenery,—with, it may be, the ewe-buchts at morn or noon, the gathering of the flocks at eve or gloamin', the tryst beside the birk, under the hawthorn, or the leafy hazel. Scottish love is set among the gowans and the daisies, by the burn-sides and the broomy knowes—

> "Ca' the ewes to the knowes,
> Ca' them where the heather grows,
> Ca' them where the burnie rows,
> My bonnie dearie."

This is the refrain of the love-lyric, and it is echoed in Ramsay, Burns, Hogg, and Tannahill. Typically enough, this is true of the experience of the young Scottish king, at the commencement almost of the love-poetry of the country. It was in this garden under the Tower that there appeared a lady walking—

"The fairest or the freschest yong[ë] floure
That ever I sawe, methoght, before that houre."

So that—

"anon astert
The blude of all my body to my hert."

He was in doubt as to whether she was "Cupid's own princess,"—

"Or ar ye verray Nature the goddesse
That have depaynted with your hevinly hand
This gardyn full of flouris, as they stand?"

The picture of the lady amid all these natural surroundings is too fine to be omitted:—

"there was, wele I wote,
Beautee eneuch to mak a world to dote.
About hir nek, quhite as the fyre amaille,[1]
A gudely cheyne[2] of smale orfeverye,[3]

[1] Enamel.
[2] Goodly chain.
[3] Gold work.

Quhareby there hang a ruby, without faille,[1]
Lyke to ane hert[ë] schapin verily,
That, as a sperk of lowe,[2] so wantonly
Seemyt birnyng[3] upon her quhitë throte;[4]
Now gif there was gud partye, God it wote."[5] *

[1] Flaw.
[2] Flame.
[3] Seemed burning.
[4] White throat.
[5] If it could well be matched, God knows.

The treatment of the garden scene from the Tower has obviously been suggested to the author of the 'Quair' by the corresponding one in the 'Knightes Tale' of Chaucer.† Palamon from the Tower

"that was so thikke and strong,
Which of the castel was the chief dongeoun,"

and through

"a wyndow thikke and many a barre
Of iren greet and squar as eny sparre,"

saw Emelie—

"that fairer was to seene
Than is the lilie on hire stalkes greene,
And fresscher than the May with floures newe,—
For with the rose colour strof hire hewe,

* Canto ii., ss. 28, 29.
† *Works*, vol. i. p. 121 *et seq.*

I not which was the fyner of hem two.

. . . . . .

He cast his eyen upon Emelya,
And therewithal he bleynte and cryed, A!
As that he stongen were unto the herte." *

But there is evidence of perhaps even a deeper, purer, closer feeling for nature—free nature, not of the well-ordered or garden sort—in other stanzas of the poem. Very touching is the reminiscence of the April morning on which he had left his home in Scotland and set sail for France, to be taken that very day when he had reached the coast of Northumberland, and carried into captivity:—

"In Vere,[1] that full of vertu is and gude,
Quhen nature first begynneth hir enprise,[2]
That quhilum[3] was be cruell frost and flude
And schouris scharp opprest in many wyse,
And Cynthius begynneth to aryse
Heigh in the est, a morow[4] soft and suete,
Upward his course to drive in Ariete;[5]
Passeit mydday bot fourë greis evin,[6]
Off lenth and brede[7] his angel wingis bryght
He spred upon the ground doune fro the hevin;

1 Spring.
2 Exercise of power.
3 Formerly.
4 In the morning.
5 Sign of Aries.
6 Four degrees precisely—*i.e.*, an hour past noon.
7 Bright both in length and breadth.

* *Works*, vol. i. p. 123.

That, for gladnesse and confort of the sight,
And with the tiklyng of his hete and light,
The tender flouris opynt thame and sprad;[1]
And, in thaire nature, thankit him for glad."

[1] Opened and spread.

The passionate delight in May which characterises Chaucer is shared in by the author of 'The Quair':—

"And, ye fresche May, ay mercifull to bridis,[2]
Now welcum be ye, floure of monethis all;
For noght only your grace upon us bydis,[3]
Bot all the warld to witnes this we call,
That strowit[4] hath so playnly over all
With new[ë], freschë, suete and tender grene,
Oure lyf, oure lust,[5] oure governoure, oure quene." *

[2] Brides.
[3] Remains.
[4] Strowed.
[5] Pleasure, delight.

This is exquisite alike in feeling and in art.

In the following stanzas, the music of a Scottish stream rings in the ear, and the quick, bright life of its fishes sports before the eye:—

"Quhare, in a lusty[6] plane, tuke I my way,
Endlang[7] a ryver, plesant to behold,
Embroudin[8] all with freschë flouris gay,

[6] Delightsome.
[7] Alongside.
[8] Embroidered.

* Canto ii., s. 46.

Quhare, throu the gravel, bryght as ony gold,
The cristall water ran so clere and cold,
That in myn erë maid contynualy
A maner[1] soune, mellit[2] with armony;
That full of lytill fischis by the brym,
Now here, now there, with bakkis blewe as lede,[3]
Lap and playit, and in a rout can swym[4]
So prattily, and dressit thame to sprede
Thaire curall[5] fynnis,[6] as the ruby rede,
That in the sonnë on thaire scalis bryght
As gesserant,[7] ay glitterit in my sight." *

[1] Moderately agreeable.
[2] Mingled.
[3] With baeks blue as lead.
[4] Did swim.
[5] Coral.
[6] Fins.
[7] Sheeny armour, coat of bright mail close-woven.

We may almost suppose that this simile in the last line is drawn directly from observation of a Scottish field:—

"Als like ye bene, as day is to the nyght,
Or sekloth is unto fyne cremesye,[8]
Or doken[9] to the freschë dayesye.[10]" †

[8] Crimson cloth.
[9] Sorrel, dock, docken.
[10] Daisy.

We may quote one moral lesson of the poem. It is characteristic of the strong individuality of the man and the monarch:—

* Canto v., s. 1 *et seq.* † Canto iii., s. 36.

"Fortune is most and strangest[1] evermore,
Quhare lest foreknawing[2] or intelligence
Is in the man; and, sone, of wit or lore
Sen[3] thou are wayke and feble, lo, therefore,
The more thou art in dangere and commune[4]
With hir, that clerkis clepen[5] so Fortune." *

[1] Strongest.
[2] Least foreknowledge.
[3] Since.
[4] In common.
[5] Name.

The career of this accomplished man,—the third of the Stuart line, and by far the noblest and most remarkable,—from his captivity as a boy, his brief reign, to his tragic and barbarous murder in that foul pit of the Dominican Monastery in Perth on the winter night of 1437, is a touching record. Evidently a man of true genius and great administrative power, he showed when he came to his kingdom that he was influenced by a tender regard for the labourers and subtenants on the landed estates of the country—that is really, at that time, for the people of the land—and did what he could to better their condition. His main difficulty was the almost independent and tyrannical local power of the barons, which practically counterpoised the Crown. It was with this he struggled during his brief but vigorous reign; and though some

* Canto iv., s. 26.

of his deeds were marked by severity, the interest which he espoused was that of a rising civilisation, — of the repression of individual licence, the cause of common justice through a central and impartial government. His death at the hands of the savage Highlander Graham was doubtless not unacceptable to the spirit of an ignorant, coarse, and tyrannical baronage. We have here, however, chiefly to deplore the premature passing away of the tender, humorous, and high-souled poet.

It seems to me that there is abundant historical evidence for the statement that all through the line of the Stuart monarchs there was a vein—somewhat latent, yet now and then showing itself — of poetic and general imaginative power. We need refer to no special evidence for this in the case of James I., the undoubted author of 'The King's Quair.' Of the personal taste of James II., who perished early, we know little. But James III. had a distinct capacity for architecture. His son, James IV., showed his highly romantic imagination in the scrupulous observance of chivalrous forms which led to the disaster of Flodden. James V. had his 'Flytings,' his poetical

contests with Dunbar, and he is probably enough the author of 'The Gaberlunzie Man,' if not of 'Christ's Kirk of the Grene.' Mary wrote sonnets with much poetical fervour; and if James VI. had not, as he himself lamented, been withdrawn from poetry by the cares of the world and the State, it was in him, judging from his early efforts, to have made a considerable name in literature. Let us at least do justice to the old Stuart line. They had their failings, but there was in them the essence of poetic soul, of culture, and of gentleness.

The writers of the period, from James the First and Blind Harry to Robert Henryson and Dunbar, afford but few gleanings. Their names, indeed, are mostly all that is left to us; and their subjects, as recorded, were not generally such as to lead to direct reference to outward nature. We have mention of the two Rowlls, David Steele, Quintin Shaw, Patrick Johnston, Mersar, Clapperton, Sir Mungo Lockhart, Sir John Ross, John Clerk, James Affleck, Alexander Trail, Heriot, Brown, Stobo, George Dundas.* They dealt in story, allegory, or moralising. The

* See Irving, *Hist. of Scottish Poetry*, p. 199 *et seq.*

anonymous poems of 'The Battle of Harlaw' and 'Cockelbie's Sow,' probably early in the fifteenth century, contain no references to nature.

In 'King Berdoch,' a burlesque of romance, about the same period, we have the bracken personified, for we find the hero turned

"intill ane bracken bush,
And when they saw the bush wog[1] to and fro,
They trowed it was ane ghost."

[1] Wag, wave.

'The Howlat of Holland,' *circa* 1453 (James II. 1437-1460), has references to scenery in the opening stanzas:—

"In the middis[2] of Mai, at morne, as I went
Throw mirth markit, on mold[3] till a grein meid,
The blemis[4] blythest of blee[5] fro the sone blent,[6]
That all brychnit[7] about the bordouris on breid.[8]
With alkin[9] herbis so ffair that war in erd[10] lent,
The fieldis flowryschit; and fretfull of fair-head,[11]
So soft was the seasons our sovrane doun sent,

[2] Midst.
[3] Ground, earth.
[4] Blooms.
[5] Colour.
[6] Shone, glanced.
[7] Brightened.
[8] Abroad.
[9] All kind.
[10] Earth.
[11] Abounding in bloom.

Throw the greabill gift off his godheid,
That all was amiable over the air and the erd.
Thus throw the clifts [1] so clere
Above, but [2] fallow [3] or fere,[4]
I walkit till a riveir
That ryallye [5] rered.[6]
The rywer ran down, but resting or rove,[7]
Throu a forest on fauld,[8] that ferlye [9] was fair,
All the brayis [10] of that buyrne [11] buir [12] brenchis above,
And birds blithest of ble [13] on blossomes bair.[14]
The birth that the ground bure [15] was broudyn [16] in bredis,[17]
With gerss [18] gay as the gold, and granis [19] of grace,
Mendis [20] and medicine for all menis (neidis);
Help till hert, and till hurt, helefull [21] it was.
Under the circle solar thir savourous [22] sedis
Were nurist be dame Nature, that nobill maistress."

1 Cliffs.
2 Without.
3 Fellow.
4 Companion.
5 Royally, majestically
6 Roared, resounded—also *reird*.
7 Without stay or impediment.
8 Open field (?).
9 Wonderfully.
10 Braes.
11 Burn.
12 Bore.
13 Of colour cheerful to see.
14 Bore down or rested.
15 Bore.
16 Embroidered.
17 Breadths.
18 Grass.
19 Branches.
20 Means of healing.
21 Healthful.
22 These savoury.

The alliteration in these lines is well worthy of notice; and it is clear too, I think, that in regard to these and other forms of versification in the older poets, the principle was not that of a succession of accented and non-accented feet,

in measured lines of equally numbered syllables, but of divisions in the lines which occupied the same or a common time in reading or reciting. This accounts for the apparent irregularities, estimated by the modern standard of an equal number of feet in each line—a point which was of comparative indifference in the older form of rhythm.

These stanzas may be taken as a typical specimen of early art in the description of nature. There is true feeling and faithfulness in its expression; but the picture is somewhat indefinite—simply outlined, as it were—and general. We have the sunbeams, the green earth, the flowers, the river, the birds noted, but hardly pictured to eye or ear. The real feeling at the root of it, the true inspiration, is mainly the sense of the delight in the open air, of the genial spring month, the soft season, and its agreeable accessories. There is a distinct suffusion of merely pleasant sensation; and the reference to the healing and helpful character of the herbs and "the savourous sedis" points specially to the feeling of utility, superadded to what is agreeable to the senses.

In a production obviously of later date than 'The Howlat of Holland,' the well-known ballad of 'The Murning Maiden,' while there is little direct picturing of the scene, there is a breezy freshness of the forest, and feeling of the natural life of the woods, which is very charming. The love-stricken but hopeless maiden betakes her to the woods with her "bow and feathered flane," [1] not for the purpose of taking the deer, but simply for the solace of the solitude:—

[1] Arrow.

"Still undir the leavis green,
This hinder day, I went alone;
I heard ane mai [2] sair murne and meyne,[3]
To the king of love she made her moan,
She sighed sely sore.[4]"

[2] Maiden.
[3] Complain.
[4] Sorely wretched.

. . . . . .

"Sen [5] that I go beguiled
With ane that faith has filed;[6]
That gars [7] me of sigh such [8] full sair,
And walk amang the holtis hair,[9]
Within the woodis wild."

[5] Since.
[6] Fouled.
[7] Causes.
[8] Sich, sigh.
[9] Explained as forests hoar—rather grey. —as *haur*, light mist.

When she is accosted by the keeper of the forest, and charged with killing the deer, he uses an expression not certainly occurring for the

first time in our ballad literature, but one of the truest and most characteristic—

"Ye have been many beastis bane
Upon thir[1] bentis brown."

[1] These.

This is the "bentis brown" of the ballad of Thomas the Rhymer, and of many a subsequent minstrel—the scene of many a tragic deed and blood-stained foray. But on this occasion the "bent sae brown" was innocent of slaughter, for the gentle maiden answers:—

"Though I walk in this forest free,
With bow and eke with feathered flane,[2]
. . . . . .
Your deer may walk, sir, their alane,[3]
Yet was I never nae beastis bane;
I may not see them bleed." *

[2] Arrow.

[3] By themselves alone.

"Bent" is here used obviously in the sense of field with its browned grass. We must, however, take care not to mistake "the bent" of the old ballads either for field or for brown heath or pasture generally. It is quite a distinctive growth—the *Nardus stricta* of our botanists,—bent, so called because it droops like wavy hair, and, about the beginning of August, passes from

* St. 10.

lint-white to deep golden, radiant like sun spaces on the moorland and hillside; and, as the autumn approaches, its tresses rise and fall before the winds of October, with a grace and pathos to be felt—not told—that well befit the mood of the waning year.

The same feeling of the open air and the freedom of the hill and forest is to be met with in 'Robene and Makyne.' Indeed we have in this poem precisely identical expressions:—

"Robene braid[1] attour[2] the bent."

"Makyne went hame blithe aneuch,[3]
Attour the holtis * hair."

"Keepand his heed under a heuch,[4]
Amang the holtis hair."

[1] Pressed, pushed on.
[2] Out over.
[3] Enough.
[4] Steep scaur—generally on stream.

This similarity of expression in the two ballads may be added to the other grounds of presumption that the author of 'The Murning Maiden' was he who wrote 'Robene and Makyne'—the accomplished Henryson, now to be noted.

* *Holtis* may mean *heights* here: it generally means *woods;* perhaps *wooded heights.*

CHAPTER VII.

NATIONAL POETS OF THE STUART PERIOD: ROBERT HENRYSON.

(1425-1498.)

Robert Henryson, supposed to have lived from 1425 to 1498 — dead before 1508 — and known as "chiefe Schole Master in Dunfermlyng"—that is, Master of the School within the precincts of the Abbey there — was at once an accomplished scholar, a skilled man of affairs, and a poet of remarkable power. 'The Testament of Cresseid' (published separately at Edinburgh, 1593), the supplement and conclusion of Chaucer's 'Troylus and Creseyde,' is regarded by the best judges as not unworthy of the father of English poetry himself. It has even been wrongly included in his works as Chaucer's own.

The story of the frail Cresseid is touchingly told, from her desertion by Diomede to the time when the faithful Troilus met her by chance as a cast-off leper by the wayside, and, with weeping heart, silently threw the gold into her lap, and the story closes in the forlorn one's penitence, tears, and death. The references to nature in Henryson are more numerous than in preceding poets, except perhaps James I.; they are introduced with great aptness, and they contain specific features of the Scottish landscape, climate, and natural appearances—new, characteristic, and peculiar. They have, further, a certain completeness and unity of picturing not before so clearly discernible in compositions of the same kind.

The touching and melancholy story of Cresseid is thus aptly and beautifully introduced; and we feel that the time is the cold early spring of Scotland—February or early March, it may be:—

"Ane doolie sesoun [1] to ane cairfull dyte [2]
Suld [3] correspond, and be equivalent;
Richt sa it wes quhen I began to write
This tragedie, the wedder [4] richt fervent,
Quhen Aries, in middis [5] of the Lent,

[1] Doleful season.
[2] Melancholy piece of writing.
[3] Should.
[4] Weather.
[5] The middle.

Schouris of haill can fra the north descend,
That scantlie fra the cauld I micht defend,

Yit, nevertheles, within myne oratur[1]
I stude,[2] when Titan had his bemis bricht
Withdrawin doun, and sylit under cure,[3]
And fair Venus, the bewtie of the nicht,
Uprais,[4] and set unto the west full richt
Her goldin face, in oppositioun
Of God Phebus, direct discending doun.

[1] Oratory, closet—*oratoire.*
[2] Stood.
[3] Carefully concealed. *Syle*, to blindfold—Icel. *skiola*=*celare.* Other reading, *skylit.*
[4] Uprose.

Throwout the glas hir bemis brast[5] sa fair,
That I micht se on everie syde me by,
The northin[6] wind had purifyit the air,
And sched the mistie cloudis fra the sky;
The froist freisit, the blastis bitterly
Fra pole Artick[7] come quhisling[8] loud and schill,
And causit me remufe[9] aganis[10] my will."*

[5] Shone, pierced.
[6] Northern.
[7] The North.
[8] Whistling.
[9] Remove.
[10] Against.

This is a thoroughly true picture of a winter evening, drawn at first hand, and with very fine touches. "Venus, the bewtie of the nicht," has doubtless suggested to Sir David Lyndsay the fine amplification,

"Quene of the sey[11] and bewtie of the nicht." †

[11] Sea.

* *Works*, p. 75, ed. Laing.
† *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 208.

"The northin wind had purifyit the air,"—

"the blastis bitterly
Fra pole Artick come quhisling loud and schill,"—

are features drawn direct from observation of the close of our winter's day.

Here is a picture of Summer:—

"In middis of June, that joly [1] sweet seasoun,
When that fair Phebus, with his bemis bricht,
Had dryit up the dew fra daill and doun,
And all the land maid with his lemis [2] licht;
In ane mornyng, betuix midday and nicht,
I rais and put all sleuth [3] and sleip asyde,
And to ane wod I went alone, but gyde.[4]
Sweit was the smell of flouris quhite and reid,
The noyis of birds richt delitious,
The bewis braid [5] bloomit abone my heid,
The ground growand with gersis [6] gratious: [7]
Of all plesance that place wes plenteous,
With sweit odouris and birdis harmonie,
The morning myld, my mirth was maire forthy.[8]

The roisis reid arrayit on rone [9] and ryce,[10]
The prymerois [11] and the purpour [12] viola;
To heir it wes ane poynt of Paradice,

1 Beautiful, merry.
2 Gleaming rays.
3 Sloth.
4 Without guide.
5 Branches broad.
6 Grasses.
7 Graceful.
8 For *forquhy*, because, for this reason.
9 Rose-busl
10 Twigs or branches.
11 Primrose
12 Purple.

Sic mirth the mavis and the merle couth ma.[1]
The blossummis blyith brak up on bank and bra,
The smell of herbis and of foullis cry,
Contending quha suld haif the victorie.

Me to conserve then fra the sonnis heit,
Under the schadow of ane hawthorne grene,
I lenit doun amang the flouris sweit,
Syne[2] clad[3] my heid, and closit baith my ene.
On sleip I fell amang the bewis bene,
And, in my dreme, methocht come throw the shaw[4]
The fairest man that ever befoir I saw.

His gowne wes of ane claith[5] als quhite as milk,
His chymeris[6] wes of chambelote[7] purpour broun;
His hude of scarlet, bordourit weill with silk
In heckillit wyis,[8] untill his girdill doun;
His bonat round, and of the auld fassoun;
His beird wes quhite, his ene wes greit and gray,
With lokker[9] hair, quhilk[10] ouer his schulderis lay."*

1 Make.
2 Then.
3 Covered.
4 Wood—perhaps coppice.
5 Cloth.
6 Cymar, light gown.
7 Camlet.
8 Perhaps fastened by means of a hook.
9 Curled.
10 Which

* *Prologue*—A Vision of Æsop. *Works*, p. 155.

In "the grasses gracious" we have a feature which only a gentle and loving eye would note. The grasses of our fields and by our waysides are the most delicately graceful forms in our landscape, and usually are not much observed, far less appreciated. "The roses red arranged on rone and ryce" obviously refers to the brier. In "the blossummis blyith brak up on bank and bra," we have a most happy picture. In "the primrose and the purple viola" we have probably the first reference to the primrose in Scottish poetry; while both lines are rich in music, as well as full of truth and beauty.

In 'The Preaching of the Swallow,' Henryson has given us a picture of the Scottish seasons, in succession, which, for true and graphic touches, and freshness of feeling, has not since been surpassed in the language:—

"The Somer with his jolye mantill of grene
With flouirs fair furrit[1] on everilk[2] fent,[3]
Whilk Flora, goddes of the flouris quene,
Hes to that lord, as for his seasoun lent;
And Phebus, with his goldin bemis gent,[4]
Hes purfellit,[5] and paintit pleasandlie,
With heit and moysture, stilland[6] from the sky.

[1] Lined with fur.
[2] Every.
[3] Opening, cleft—*fendre*, to cleave, slit.
[4] Gent implies tallness and grace—honourable bearing. Phœbus gracefully adorned.
[5] Ornamented about the edges.
[6] Distilling.

Syne[1] Harvest hait, when Ceres that goddess,
Her barnis beinit[2] hes with abundance;
And Bacchus, god of wyne, renewit hes
The tume[3] pypes in Italie and France,
With wynis wicht,[4] and liquour of plesance;
And Copia temporis[5] to fill hir horne,
That never wes full of quheit nor uther corne.

Syne Wynter wan, quhen austern[6] Eolus,
God of the wynd, with blastis boreall,
The grene garment of somer glorious
Hes all to rent and revin in pecis small;
Than[7] flouris fair, faidit with frost, mon[8] fall,
And birdis blyith changit thair noitis sweit
In still murning, neir slane[9] with snaw and sleit.

Thir dailis[10] deip with dubbis[11] drownit is,
Baith hill and holt[12] heillit[13] with frostis hair;[14]
And bewis[15] bene[16] are laiffit[17] bair of bliss
By wickit windis of the Winter wair.[18]
All wyld beistis than from the bentis[19] bair
Drawis for dreid unto their dennis deip,
Coucheand for cauld in coiffis[20] thame to keip.

1 Then.
2 Stored her barns.*
Empty.
4 Strong.
5 The Goddess of Plenty.
6 Austere.
7 Then.
8 Must.
9 Nearly slain.
10 These dales.
11 Pools of water.
12 Wood.
13 Covered, overspread.
14 Hoar.
15 Branches.
16 Comfortable.
17 Left.
18 Waste.
19 Fields of bent, or moorland generally.
20 Caves.

* *Bein*, in comfortable circumstances—perhaps originally well-lodged—*bye*, *dwelling*.

Syne cummis Ver, quhen Winter is away,
The secretar of Somer, with his seeill,
Quhen columbine * up keikis [1] throw the clay,
Quhilk fleit [2] wes befoir with frostis feeill.
The maveis and the merle beginnis to mell; [3]
The lark on loft,[4] with uther birdis small
Then drawis furth fra derne,[5] ouer doun and dail.

[1] Peeps.
[2] Frightened, so as to hide itself.
[3] Contend, perhaps mingle.
[4] High.
[5] Dark or secret retreat.

That samin [6] seasoun, in to ane soft morning,
Richt blyith that bitter blastis wer ago,[7]
Unto the wod [8] to se the flouris spring,
And heir the maveis sing, and birdis mo,[9]
I passit furth, syne lukit to and fro,
To se the soyll that wes richt sessonabill [10]
Sappie, and to resaif [11] all seidis abill.

[6] Same.
[7] Gone.
[8] Wood.
[9] More.
[10] Seasonable.
[11] Receive.

Muving thus gait [12] greit mirth I tuke in mynd
Of lauboraris [13] to se the besines; [14]
Sum makand dyke,[15] and sum the pleuch can wynd,
Some sawand [16] seidis fast, from place to place,
The harrowis hoppand [17] in the saweris [18] trace;

[12] This way.
[13] Labourers
[14] Assiduity
[15] Wall of earth originally, now of stone without mortar.
[16] Sowing.
[17] Hopping —referring to the irregular tilting motion.
[18] Sower's.

* As the columbine belongs to the Ranunculaceæ, this may be the ranunculus, crowfoot, spearwort, celandine, or the larkspur, &c.

[1] Loved.

It was greit joy to him that luifit [1] corne,
To se thame laubour, baith at evin and morne." *

Notwithstanding the introduction of the classical names, less pedantic then than afterwards, the images here are of the Scottish seasons all through, the result of truthful and loving observation. "Winter wan," and "the rent and riven garment of summer," the change of the notes of the birds into still mourning, the branches reft of their summer bliss, the peeping through the clay of the ranunculus that had fled away frightened by the frosts, and the picture of the workers in the fields, are all highly graphic and characteristic. Nor should we fail to note that the pleasure of the soft morning in spring is enhanced to the poet by the remembrance of the winter now gone:—

"Richt blyith that bitter blastis wer ago."

Winter was to Henryson, and, as we shall have abundant opportunities of seeing, all down through Scottish poetry to nearly our own time, simply repugnant, cold, and cruel, presenting no æsthetical feature with which the poets, and,

* *Works*, p. 170 *et seq.*

therefore, much less the people, could sympathise. The feeling of Spring, the pleasure of May — "mirthful May, of every moneth queen" — is immeasurably intensified by the memory of the recent winter and its hardships, and the sense of escape into the more genial months. Yet even under this feeling Henryson has risen almost to the purity of the symbolical imagination. He gives us an idealised picture of winter, which, while designed to be dreadful, has yet a distinct æsthetical power. This is how Henryson, more than four hundred years ago, depicts — "depaints" — our Scottish winter, under the impersonation of Saturn :—

"His face frosnit,[1] his lyre[2] was lyke the leid,[3]
His teith chatterit, and chiverit with the chin,
His ene drowpit,[4] how,[5] sonkin[6] in his heid.
Out of his nois the meldrop[7] fast can rin,
With lippis bla,[8] and cheikis leine and thin;
The iceschoklis[9] that fra his hair doun hang,
Was wonder greit, and as ane speir als lang.

Attouir[10] his belt his lyart lokkis[11] lay
Feltrit unfair[12] ouirfret with froistis hoir,[13]

1 Frozen.
2 Skin or flesh.
3 Lead.
4 Drooped.
5 Hollow.
6 Sunken.
7 Mucous drop.
8 Bluish.
9 Icicles.
10 Over.
11 Grey locks.
12 Entangled uncomely.
13 Freckled with hoar-frost.

His garmound and his gyis[1] full gay of gray,
His widdered weid fra him the wind out woir;
Ane busteous[2] bow within his hande he boir;
Under his girdill ane flasche of fellone flanis,[3]
Fedderit[4] with ice, and heidit with hail-stanis."[5] *

[1] Mode.
[2] Powerful.
[3] A sheaf of cruel arrows.
[4] Feathered.
[5] Hail-stones.

There are separate touches in the poem well worth noting:—

"The foullis[6] fair sae forcelie[7] thay fle,
Scheddand[8] the air with pennis[9] greit and small."

[6] Birds.
[7] Swiftly.
[8] Dividing, cleaving.
[9] Wings.

"Sum (birds) with ane bir thay braidit[10] ouer the bent."

[10] Hurried, passed rapidly.

Then in June:—

"And als the Quailzie[11] craikand in the corne;
I movit furth betuix mid day and morne."

[11] Land-rail, corn-crake.

Motherwell, centuries afterwards, refers to its note in the gloaming:—

"The corn-crake was chirming
Its sad, eerie cry,
And the wee stars were dreaming
Their path through the sky."

* *Works*, p. 80.

In point of truth and novelty, vivid picturing, completeness and unity of impression, Henryson is the first Scottish poet who has given us the familiar landscape of his own country, revealed to us, almost without foreign taint, the richness and the beauty of the nature at our own doors. He rose to a sense of feeling and picturing far beyond what any native-bred Scottish poet had done before — a genuine æsthetical emotion, far above the mere agreeableness of sensation. He was on the very margin even of the pure feeling for the grandeur of power in the sterner side of things. And one is pleased to think that he has put his impressions into a vernacular Scottish, than which there is none purer in the whole period from the middle of the fifteenth century to the Reformation and onwards—indeed, during the living period of the true Scottish language.

CHAPTER VIII.

NATIONAL POETS OF THE STUART PERIOD: WILLIAM DUNBAR.

(1450-1520.)

William Dunbar (1450-1520 conjecturally), apparently of the family of Dunbar of Biel, a cadet of the old Earls of March, was the great "makyr" of the reign of James IV., and, according to Sir Walter Scott and others, the greatest of what may be regarded as the ancient poets of Scotland. Dunbar was certainly a man of wonderfully varied powers—strong in imaginative creation, in scathing realistic sarcasm, and remarkable for force of description of natural scenery. His character as a man does not here concern us. It is somewhat of a puzzle in its marked contrast between what he did and said he was, and what he wrote. Possibly the

writing, being the work of his contemplative hours, sets his conduct and manners in the light of reproachful reflection, and so gives us the real inner soul of the man, in an age when the inducements to self-seeking to a poor man and profligacy to an ardent nature were great, and stronger than the individual, unsupported by aught out of himself, could wholly withstand. Certainly the refinement, delicacy, true touch of his descriptions of nature, show in him a fervour, a tenderness, and elevation that belong only to souls of the highest and finest mould.

We must keep in mind, further, in regard to Dunbar, that he was a highly educated man, versed in all the learning of his time—a man, too, often engaged in public affairs of the greatest moment, and a pretty constant resident at the Court of James IV. In the language of his poetry we shall thus find the result of his training in the abundant use of words of classical, especially Latin, origin; and we may detect that tendency to classicalism which grew to pedantry in the hands of Douglas and Lyndsay, and less notable men. The genius of the speech of Barbour, and even of

Henryson, was thus not strengthened or developed, but rather weakened, and in some measure perverted.

Dunbar's feeling for nature is shown at its best in his two well-known and characteristic poems of 'The Thistle and the Rose' and 'The Golden Targe.'

The following is the opening of 'The Thistle and the Rose':—

"Quhen Merche wes with variand windis past,
And Appryll had, with her silver schouris,
Tane leif[1] at nature with an orient blast;
And lusty[2] May, that muddir[3] is of flouris,
Had maid[4] the birdis to begyn thair houris[5]
Amang the tendir colouris reid[6] and quhyt,[7]
Quhais[8] armony[9] to heir it wes delyt;

In bed at morrow, sleiping as I lay,
Me thocht Aurora, with her cristall ene,
In at the window lukit by the day,
And halsit[10] me, with visage paill and grene;
On quhois hand a lark sang fro the splene,[11]
Awalk,[12] luvaris,[13] out of your slomering,[14]
Se how the lusty[15] morrow dois up spring.

1 Leave.
2 Pleasant.
3 Mother.
4 Made.
5 Matins, orisons.
6 Red.
7 White.
8 Whose.
9 Harmony.
10 Saluted.
11 Heart.
12 Awake.
13 Lovers.
14 Slumbering.
15 Pleasure-bringing.

Me thocht[1] fresche May befoir my bed up-stude,[2]
In weid[3] depaynt of mony diverss hew,
Sobir, benyng,[4] and full of mansuetude,
In brycht atteir[5] of flouris forgit[6] new,
Hevinly of colour, quhyt, reid, broun, and blew,
Balmit[7] in dew, and gilt with Phebus bemys,[8]
Quhill all the houss illumynit of hir lemys.[9]

[1] Methought. [2] Upstood. [3] Dress. [4] Benign. [5] Attire. [6] Forged. [7] Embalmed. [8] Beams. [9] Rays.

'Slugird,'[10] scho said, 'awalk annone for schame,
And in my honour sum thing thow go wryt;
The lark hes done the mirry day proclame,
To raiss up luvaris with confort[11] and delyt,
Yit nocht incressis thy curage to indyt,
Quhois hairt sum tyme hes glaid[12] and blisfull bene,
Sangis[13] to mak undir the levis grene.'

[10] Sluggard. [11] Comfort. [12] Has glad. [13] Songs.

. . . . . .

Quhen this wes said, depairtit she, this quene,
And enterit in a lusty gairding gent;[14]
And than,[15] me thocht, full hestely besene,[16]
In serk and mantill [efter hir] I went
In to this garth,[17] most dulce[18] and redolent
Off herb and flour, and tendir plantis sueit,
And grene levis doing of dew doun fleit.[19]

[14] Beautiful, adorned garden. [15] Then. [16] Hastily dressed. [17] Garden. [18] Sweet. [19] Floating from, dropping.

The purpour[1] sone,[2] with tendir bemys reid,
In orient bricht as angell did appeir,
Throw goldin skyis putting up his heid,
Quhois gilt tresses schone so wondir cleir,
That all the world tuke confort, fer and neir,[3]
To look upon his fresche and blisfull face,
Doing all sable fro the hevynnis chace.

And as the blissful soune[4] of cherarchy[5]
The fowlis song throw confort of the licht;
The birdis did with oppin vocis cry,
O, luvaris fo,[6] away thou dully nycht,
And welcum day that confortis every wicht;[7]
Haill May, haill Flora, haill Aurora schene,[8]
Haill princes[9] Natur, haill Venus luvis quene." †

1 Purple, rose-red.*
2 Sun.
3 Far and near.
4 Sound.
5 Angelic hierarchy.
6 Foe.
7 Person.
8 Sheen.
9 Princess.

This description is very powerful in its grasp, selection, and subordination of features. The personifications of Aurora and May are finely conceived; and though the picture is suffused with a sense of the physical pleasure, refreshment, and gratification of the sun-light and the new-born May, there is a distinct ascent to the higher

* See below, p. 230.

† *The Poems of William Dunbar.* Edited by John Small, M.A., P. 183 *et seq.* Scottish Text Society.

æsthetical feeling,—the disinterested delight in at least the softer side of nature,—the notes of birds, the varied colouring, the splendour of dawn. The landscape described is still, however, the formal garden, with the touch of the hand of man. Free, wild nature has as yet no place in the poet's description—if we except the very powerful impersonation of the thistle, natural in the circumstances, among the flowers of the field:—

"Then callit scho all flouris that grew on feild,
Discirnyng[1] all thair fassionis[2] and effeiris;[3]
Upone the awful Thrissil[4] scho beheld,
And saw him kepit[5] with a busche of speiris;[6]
Concedring[7] him so able for the weiris,[8]
A radius croun of rubeis[9] scho him gaif,[10]
And said, 'In feild go forth, and fend[11] the laif.'"[12] *

[1] Discerning. [2] Fashions. [3] Properties. [4] Thistle. [5] Keepèd. [6] Bush of spears. [7] Considering. [8] Wars. [9] Rubies. [10] Gave. [11] Defend. [12] The others.

'The Golden Targe' has the following stirring stanzas:—

"Ryght[13] as the stern[14] of day begouth[15] to schyne,
Quhen gone to bed war Vesper and Lucyne,

[13] Soon as. [14] Star. [15] Began.

* P. 187.

I raise, and by a rosere[1] did me rest;
Up sprang the goldyn candill matutyne,
With clere depurit[2] bemes cristallyne,
Glading the mery foulis in thair nest;
Or[3] Phebus was in purpur[4] cape[5] revest[6]
Up raise the lark, the hevyns menstrale[7] fyne
In May, in till a morow myrthfullest.

Full angellike thir birdis sang thair houris[8]
Within thair courtyns[9] grene, in to thair bouris,
Apparalit quhite and red, wyth blomes[10] suete;
Anamalit[11] was the felde wyth all colouris,
The perly droppis schake[12] in silvir schouris,
Quhill[13] all in balme did branch and levis flete;[14]
To part fra Phebus did Aurora grete,
Hir cristall teris[15] I saw hyng on the flouris,
Quhilk[16] he for lufe all drank up with his hete.

For mirth of May, wyth skippis and wyth hoppis,
The birdis sang upon the tender croppis,[17]
With curiouse note, as Venus chapell clerkis;
The rosis young, new spreding of thair knoppis,[18]
War powderit brycht with hevinly beriall[19] droppis,

[1] Rose-bush, or arbour of roses.
[2] Purified.
[3] Before.
[4] Rose-red.
[5] Mantle.
[6] Clothed.
[7] Minstrel.
[8] Orisons.
[9] Curtains.
[10] Blooms.
[11] Enamelled.
[12] Shook.
[13] While.
[14] Float.
[15] Tears.
[16] Which.
[17] Young growths.
[18] Buds (knobs).
[19] Beryl-like.

Throu bemes rede, birnyng[1] as ruby sperkis;
The skyes rang for schoutyng of the larkis,
The purpur[2] hevyn our scailit[3] in silvir sloppis,[4]
Ourgilt[5] the treis, branchis, lef[is][6] and barkis.[7]

Doun throu the ryce[8] a ryvir ran wyth stremys,
So lustily[9] agayn[10] thai lykand[11] lemys,[12]
That all the lake[13] as lamp did leme[14] of licht,
Quhilk schadowit all about wyth twynkling glemis;
That bewis[15] bathit war in fecund bemys
Throu the reflex of Phebus visage brycht;
On every syde the hegies raise on hicht,[16]
The bank was grene, the bruke[17] was full of bremys,[18]
The stanneris[19] clere as stern[20] in frosty nycht.

The cristall air, the sapher[21] firmament,
The ruby skyes of the orient,
Kest[22] beriall bemes on emerant[23] bewis grene;
The rosy garth[24] depaynt[25] and redolent,
With purpur, azure, gold, and goulis[26] * gent[27]

* If *goulis* is from Fr. *gueule*, the throat, it means *red*, as in heraldry. *Gule* is marigold.

1 Burning.
2 Rose-red.
3 Scattered, overflowed.
4 Showers.
5 Gilded over.
6 Leaves.
7 Trunks.
8 Brushwood—also *rise, rys.*
9 Delightfully.
10 Against.
11 Grateful.
12 Rays.
13 Probably pool, or slow-moving expanded part of the river—AS. *lac, laca,* standing pool.
14 Sparkle.
15 Boughs.
16 Hedges rose on high.
17 Brook.
18 Bursts of sound, or perhaps rapids—*Brim, wave of the sea.*
19 Gravel or shingle by the bank of the river—Nor. *steinur* —or perhaps pebbles in the stream.
20 Star.
21 Sapphire.
22 Cast.
23 Emerald.
24 Garden.
25 Adorned.
26 Gules.
27 Adorned, fair, beautiful.

Arayed was, by dame Fflora the quene,
So nobily, that ioy was for to sene;[1]
The roch[2] agayn[3] the ryvir resplendent
As low[4] enlumynit all the leves[5] schene.

Quhat throu the mery foulys armony,
And throu the ryveris sounn[6] richt ran me by,
On Fflorais mantill I slepit as I lay,
Quhare sone[7] in to my dremes fantasy
I saw approch agayn[8] the orient sky,
A saill,[9] als quhite as blossum upon spray,
Wyth merse[10] of gold, brycht as the stern of day;
Quhilk tendit to the land full lustily,
As falcounn swift desyrouse[11] of hir pray.

And hard on burd[12] unto the blomyt medis,[13]
Amang the grene rispis[14] and the redis,
Arrivit sche, quhar fro anonn thare landis
Ane hundreth ladyes, lusty in to wedis,[15]
Als fresch as flouris that in May up spredis,
In kirtillis[16] grene, withoutyn kell[17] or bandis:[18]
Thair brycht hairis hang gletering on the strandis
In thressis clere, wyppit[19] wyth goldyn thredis,[20]
With pappis quhite, and mydlis small as wandis.

[1] To see.
[2] Rock.
[3] Against.
[4] Flame.
[5] Leaves.
[6] Sound.
[7] Soon.
[8] Against.
[9] A sail, vessel.
[10] Mast.
[11] Desirous.
[12] Probably close on the ground.
[13] Bloomèd meads.
[14] Rushes.
[15] Beautifully clothed.
[16] Originally girdle or short petticoat. Here probably jacket, short-gown.
[17] Cowl, hood, veil.
[18] Knots.
[19] Bound round about, entwined.
[20] Threads.

. . . . . .

There saw I May, of myrthfull monethis[1] quene, [1] Months.
Betwix Aprile, and June, her sister schene,
Within the gardyng walking up and doun,
Quham of the foulis gladdith al bedene;[2] [2] Forthwith.
Scho was full tender in hir yeris grene.
Thare saw I Nature present hir a gounn[3] [3] Gown.
Rich to behald, and nobil of renounn,
Off eviry hew under the hevin that bene
Depaynt, and broud[4] be gude proporcioun." * [4] Embroidered.

This description is characterised by an intense sense of colour;—delight in sun-brightness and its reflected splendour; in the bowers of the birds apparelled in white and red and sweet blooms; the variously enamelled field; the pearly drops shaking in silver showers; the gleaming river, and the stones by its channel-bed shining clear as stars after the dew of the morning. The poet revels not less in the joyous resonant notes of the morning birds; and the whole picture is suffused with the predominating emotion of fresh and exulting joy, to which every feature of the scene readily lends itself. Yet it is a generalised picture. There are few

* *The Golden Targe.* Small's *Dunbar*, p. 1 *et seq.*

wholly specific features noted by the poet—in such a way, at least, that we can say distinctively,—that is a May morning in Scotland, even taking our May at its best. The garden idea also predominates in the scene. There is, however, a fine powerful freedom in the picture of the river; and in the reference to "the blomyt medis," with "the grene rispis and the redis," we have a bit of direct eye-painting.

One fine and true touch in this picture is that of the river rushing with sparkling gleam deep down through the copse on its sides, and giving back the light from the sun, and so bathing all the boughs in "second beams," "throu the reflex of Phebus visage brycht."

With regard to certain epithets here applied to colours, it is clear that they are not used exactly in the modern sense. Thus *purpur*, like its originals πορφύρεος and *purpureus*, indicates several varying shades of colour. *Purpureus*, from which it is directly taken, besides indicating as a later usage purple, the shell-fish dye, or the mixture of blue and red, is applied to *red, reddish violet, brownish, blackish, dark;* very frequently—especially in the poets—it means *rose-red, rosy*, as "flos purpureus rosæ"

in Horace, "purpurea Aurora" in Ovid. So with regard to πορφύρεος, which Anacreon applies to Ἀφροδίτη (ii. 3). Clearly, I think, in Dunbar and the Scottish poets generally, when applied to the sun or its rays, it means *rose-red.* Perhaps, also, there is a suggestion of *brightness* —that is, intensity of colouring, as in πορφύρεος itself, applied to the rainbow by Homer (Iliad, xvii. 547). "Phebus in purpur cape revest" is simply the sun in its mantle of *bright rose-red.*

With regard to the use of the appellative "grene," "greene," which is very common in Scottish poetry, applied to wood and mead, it is evident that it is not to be taken in the limited sense of the word, as indicating a single definite colour, or what we commonly know as green. In many cases—probably in most—it is to be understood as indicating *pale green* or *yellowish green,*—that shade of colour which we find in spring and early summer on many trees and shrubs, and on young shoots in the fields. In the Romance of 'Eger and Grime,' for example, it is distinctly used in the sense of yellowish green. Sir Grime, condoling with Sir Eger, after his defeat and severe wounding by Gray Steele, says—

"And now thou art both pale and greene." *

As Mr Furnivall has pointed out in a note to this passage, the χλωρός of the Greeks meant pale green, light green, yellowish green,—the colour of young grass or corn. The Gaelic Celts, moreover, with a finely discriminative sense of colour, called Beltane—the 1st or 2d of May—"the yellow." At that period of the year, indeed, this epithet is much more literally accurate and expressive than our common and undiscriminating appellation "green."

This view is to some extent supported by the use of *green* for new,—as *green* fish—that is, fresh, not salted; *green* applied to a grave, newly opened; and green as opposed to dry or sapless,—all given by Jamieson, who suggests Teutonic *groen, recens.* But the root is more probably the old Norse, to grow, as the transference would be easy to newness. Wedgwood, indeed, explains *green* by "the colour of growing herbs," and refers to the old Norse or Icelandic *grae, at groa,* to grow, to flourish; *grœnn,* green. This exactly suits the idea of pale or yellowish green.

* Line 69.

There is another picture of a summer morning by Dunbar well worth quoting:—

"The day did up daw,[1] and dew donkit[2] the flouris;
The morow myld wes et meik, the mavis did sing,
And all remuffit[3] the myst, and the meid smellit;
Silver schouris doune schuke,[4] as the schene cristall,
And berdis schoutit in schaw, with thair schill notis;
The goldin glitterand gleme,[5] so gladit ther hertis,
Thai maid a glorius gle[6] amang the grene bewis.[7]
The soft souch of the swyr,[8] and soune[9] of the stremys,
The sueit savour of the sward, [and] singing of foulis,
Myght confort ony creatur of the kyn of Adam;
And kindill agane his curage thocht[10] it wer cald sloknyt."[11] *

[1] Updawn.
[2] Moistened.
[3] Removed, moved away.
[4] Shook.
[5] Ray.
[6] Glorious glee.
[7] Boughs.
[8] Neck or dip, forming a pass over a hill—Sax. *sweor*, also *sware*, *swyre*, *squhyre*.
[9] Sound.
[10] Though.
[11] Cold quenched.

This picture is evidently drawn from the Scottish landscape at first hand. "The soft

* Small's *Dunbar*, p. 46.

souch of the swyr, and soune of the stremys" could have been written only in Scotland, and with a memory borrowed from a day's walk among the Lowland hills and waters.

Dunbar's 'Meditatioun in Wyntir' is a singularly fine reflective poem. It breathes the feeling of discomfort and discontent, even disgust, caused by winter, which is characteristic of all our older Scottish poetry; but this appears in the poem as simply the background of pure moral lessons. The following stanzas suffice to show this:—

"In to thir dirk [1] and drublie [2] dayis,
Quhone [3] sabill all the hewin arrayis,
With mystie vapouris, cluddis and skyis,
Nature all curage me denyis,
Off sangis, ballatis, and of playis.

Quhen that the nycht dois lenthin [4] houris,
With wind, with haill, and havy schouris,
My dule spreit [5] dois lurk for schoir; [6]
My hairt for languor dois forloir,[7]
For laik [8] of symmer [9] with his flouris.

. . . . . .

Yit, quhone [10] the nycht begynnis to schort,[11]
It dois my spreit sum part confort,

[1] These dark.
[2] Probably same as *drumlie*, muddy-coloured, Teut. *turbelen*, Fr. *troublé*.
[3] When.
[4] Lengthen.
[5] Saddened spirit.
[6] Cowed, threatened.
[7] Droop, become forlorn or melancholy.
[8] Lack.
[9] Summer.
[10] When.
[11] Shorten.

Off thocht oppressit with the schouris.
Cum, lustie Symmer![1] with thy flouris,
That I may leif[2] in sum disport." [3] *

[1] Delightful summer. [2] Live. [3] Cheerfulness, merriment.

In his poem on 'The Changes of Life,' Dunbar makes wonderful use of the power of analogy, and the strong lines of resemblance between the life of man and the world of nature:—

"Yisterday fair sprang the flowris,
This day thai ar[4] all slane with schouris;
And foulis in forrest that sang cleir,
Now walkis[5] with ane drerie cheir,
Full cauld ar bayth thair beddis and bouris.

[4] Are. [5] Awake.

So nixt to symmer, wynter bene;[6]
Nixt eftir confort, cairis[7] keine;
Nixt eftir myd nycht, the myrthfull morrow;
Nixt eftir joy, ay cumis sorrow:
So is this warld, and ay hes bene." †

[6] Is. [7] Cares.

And nowhere is his power of application of the principles better felt than in the lines 'To a Ladye,' who was "mercyless," when he says—

"In to your garthe[8] this day I did persew,
Thair saw I flowris that fresche wer of hew;

[8] Garden.

* Small's *Dunbar*, p. 233 *et seq.* † *Ibid.*, p. 232.

Both quhyte[1] and reid moist lusty wer to seyne,
And halsum[2] herbis upone stalkis grene;
Yit leif nor flour fynd could I nane of rew."[3]

[1] White.
[2] Wholesome.
[3] Rue.

And this is not the only point of kinship between the two poets—the grand old Dunbar and the Wordsworth of our day. Let any one read Dunbar's 'Lament for the Makaris,' written "quhen he wes seik," and compare it with Wordsworth's lines on hearing of the death of the Ettrick Shepherd, and he will find a deep and true communion of feeling in the hearts of the two poets. There is the same fine sympathy with brother souls who lived, and felt, and sang of this world, in strains no doubt very different from his own, but yet recognising the higher vision and the lofty flight, the soaring above the unworldly, the God-ward consecration. If Dunbar generously laments men of his own day, or near it—Henryson, gentle Stobo, Kennedy, and Traill, "slaine with the schour of mortall haill,"—so Wordsworth has his pathetic sorrow for those he has known—for Southey, Scott, and Hogg.

Thus writes Dunbar—

"No stait[1] in erd heir standis sickir;[2]
As with the wynd wavis the wickir,[3]
[So] wavis this warldis vanitë;
Timor Mortis conturbat me.

. . . . . .

Sen he has all my brether[4] tane,
He will naught lat me lif[5] alane,
On forse[6] I man his nyxt pray[7] be;
Timor Mortis conturbat me."

[1] State. [2] Sure. [3] Twig. [4] Brethren. [5] Live. [6] Perforce. [7] Prey.

What says the later poet?—

"As clouds that rake the mountain summits,
As waves that own no curbing hand,
How fast has brother followed brother,
From sunshine to the sunless land.
Yet I whose lids from infant slumber
Were earlier raised, remain to hear
A timid voice that asks in whispers,
'Who next will drop and disappear?'"

Poetry, at the stage of Dunbar, as here given, is on its way to the realisation of that pure symbolism of human life and emotion in the natural world, which rose to its perfection in the seer-like imagination of Wordsworth.

We have the fusion of the scenery with the lover's passion in a very early song entitled 'Tayis Bank,' later probably than James I., but supposed by Irving to be not more modern than the age of Dunbar.* The following stanzas show the references to natural scenery:—

"Raising the birdis fra thair rest,
The reid sone[1] raiss with rawis;[2]
The lark sang lowd, quhill lycht mycht lest,[3]
A lay of luvis lawis;[4]
The nythingall[5] woik of hir nest,[6]
Singing, 'The day updawis;'[7]
The mirthfull maveiss merriest
Schill[8] schowttit throw the schawis.[9]

All flouris grew that firth[10] within,
That man cowth haif[11] in mynd,
And in that flud all fische with fyn,
That creat wer be kynd:[12]
Undir the rise[13] the ra[14] dyd ryn[15]
Our ron,[16] our rute,[17] our rynd;[18]
The dun deir[19] dansit with a dyn,
And herdis of hairt and hynd.

1 Red sun.
2 Rose with rays.
3 While light might last.
4 Love's laws.
5 Nightingale.
6 Flew wandering from her nest.
7 Updawns.
8 Shrill.
9 Wood.
10 Field or cultivated land, where perhaps wood.
11 Could have.
12 Created according to kinds.
13 Brambles, twigs—as of hazel.
14 Roe.
15 Run.
16 Rose-bush, bush.
17 Root.
18 Rind.
19 Dun deer.

* *History of Scottish Poetry*, p. 206.

Wod [1] winter, with his wallowand wynd,[2]
But weir,[3] * away wes went:
Brasit about [4] with wyld wodbynd [5]
Were bewis [6] on the bent:
Allone under the lusty lynd,[7]
I saw ane lusum [8] lent,[9]
That fairly [10] war so fare to fynd
Undir the firmament."

. . . . . .

To creatur that wes in cair,
Or cauld of crewelty,
A blicht blenk [11] of hir vesage [12] bair
Of baill [13] his bute [14] mycht be;
Hir hyd, hir hew,[15] hir hevinly hair
Mycht havy [16] hairtis uphie; [17]
So angelik under the air
Nevir wicht [18] I saw with E.

The blossummes that wer blycht and brycht [19]
By hir wer blacht [20] and blew;
Scho [21] gladit [22] all the foull of flicht,
That in the forrest flew.

. . . . . .

1 Wild, furious. So Woden, the wrath-moved god.
2 Withering wind.
3 Without doubt.
4 Entwined, embraced.
5 Woodbine.
6 Branches.
7 Pleasant lime-tree—also teille-tree, *Tilia.*
8 Lovesome.
9 Stayed—*leind*, to dwell, remain.
10 Hardly.
11 Blythe blink.
12 Countenance.
13 Sorrow.
14 Salvation.
15 Her skin, her complexion.
16 Heavy.
17 Upraise.
18 Creature—AS. *wiht.*
19 Blithe and bright.
20 Beside her were pale, wan—from *bley*, lead.
21 She.
22 Gladdened.

* "All that his mother aucht but weir."—Dunbar, *Sen that I am a Prisoner.* Same as *bot wene.*

As parradyce that place but peir[1]
Wes plesant to my sicht;
Of forrest and of fresch reveir,[2]
Of firth, and fowll of flicht,
Of birdis, bath on bonk[3] and breir,[4]
With blumes brekand[5] bricht,
As hevin in to his erd[6] doun heir,
Hertis to hald on hicht.[7]

So went this womanly away
Amang thir woddis wyd,[8]
And I to heir thir birdis gay
Did in a bonk abyd,
Quhair ron[9] and ryss[10] raiss in aray,
Endlang[11] the rever syd;
This hapnit[12] me in a tyme in May
In till a morning tyd.[13]

The rever throw the ryse cowth rowt,[14]
And roseris[15] raiss on raw;[16]
The schene[17] birdis full schill[18] cowth schowt
Into that semly schaw:[19]
Joy wes within and joy without,
Under that wlonkest[20] waw[21]
Quhair Tay ran down with stremis stout
Full strecht[22] under Stobschaw." *

1 Without peer.
2 River.
3 Bank or *bauk*.
4 Brier.
5 Breaking.
6 Earth.
7 As if heaven came down into this earth to raise our hearts on high.
8 These woods wide.
9 Rose-bush.
10 Undergrowth, bushes.
11 Along.
12 Happened.
13 Tide, time.
14 Did roar—AS. *hrutan*.
15 Rosebushes.
16 Rose in rows.
17 Bright.
18 Shrill, clear.
19 Beautiful wood.
20 Fairest.
21 Wall, bank.
22 Straight.

* *Ancient Popular Poetry of Scotland*, No. 11. Laing, 1882. Reprinted, 1885.

This is pure, direct drawing from nature,—what was open to eye and ear. With the exception of the fictitious and conventional nightingale, there is not a false note.

"Wod winter, with his wallowand wynd"—

that is—

"Wild winter, with his withering wind;"—

finer, truer line of winter in Scotland never was written. "Wallowand" we may render by "withering," but the former epithet suggests more than the latter, and that is the fading, sere-becoming colour of the brighter season.

The story of the lady of whom this ballad is supposed to have been written is a touching one. She was Margaret Drummond, eldest daughter of John Lord Drummond, whose seat was Stobshaw, on the Tay. She was, when a young girl, the beloved and secretly affianced bride of James IV. Under promise of marriage, which was opposed on grounds of State policy, she bore the King a daughter in 1497. Some three years afterwards, Lady Margaret, her sister Lady Fleming, and a young unmarried sister Sybilla, died together suddenly, not without suspicion of poison—the motive being that of

freeing the King from his promise. "They ly buried," says the historian of the family of Drummond, William, Viscount of Strathallan, "in a curious vault, covered with 3 fair blue marble stones joined closs together, about the middle of the quyre of the Cathedrall church of Dumblane." *

* 1681, MS. folio 188. Quoted by D. Laing, *Ancient Popular Poetry, Tayis Bank.*

CHAPTER IX.

NATIONAL POETS OF THE STUART PERIOD: GAWIN DOUGLAS.

(1474-1522.)

GAWIN DOUGLAS* (1474-1522) was the third

* The name is sometimes now written *Gavin*. It is certain, I think, that it was never so written, or so pronounced, by Douglas himself or any of his contemporaries. In the title of the translation of the *Æneid* it is *Gawin* (original edition, 1553). Sir David Lyndsay writes it *Gawane* (*Papyngo*, l. 22). But Douglas himself clenches the matter when he writes—

"The *Gaw* onbrokyn mydlyt wyth the *Wyne*,
The *Dow* jonyt wyth the *Glas* richt in a lyne:
Quha knawis nocht the translatouris name,
Seyk na forthar, for lo, wyth lytill pane
Spy weill this verse; men clepis him swa at haym
Quod the compilar, G. DOUGLACE."

(Lines affixed to close of Twelfth Book. Small, *Works*, vol. iv. p. 167.) It should be remembered, also, that the letter *v* was frequently printed for *w*.

son of Archibald the fifth Earl of Angus,* remarkable for his force of character, even in the line from which he sprang.

We need not enter into the controversy as to the precise origin and time of appearance in Scottish history of the great name of Douglas. There is some probability for the supposition that the name *Dhu-glas*, or the *dark-grey man*, is traceable to a personage of a native race; and in this strain of blood is perhaps to be found the impulse to that anti-foreign feeling of hostility to English aggression which characterised the family, especially the Good Sir James of Douglas, the faithful ally of Bruce, and his main help in the restoration of the ancient Scottish monarchy. The Angus branch of the great house of Douglas, whose coronet for long "counterpoised the Crown," succeeded to the representation of the main line on the death of James the ninth Earl of Douglas, in the Abbey of Lindores in 1488. The poet was thus a scion

* Godscroft makes him sixth Earl, but this rests on the somewhat unwarranted assumption that William Douglas, who married Margaret Stewart, Countess of Mar and Angus, in 1381, was the first Earl. Properly speaking, George Douglas, son of Margaret Stewart, was the first Earl of Angus of the Douglas line.

of the most honourable and powerful of the Scottish families. From the time of the Good Sir James of Douglas, who, with Bruce, laid the foundations of the monarchy, afterwards to be the patrimony of the Stuarts, down to the day when the last Earl, old, ruined, a prisoner, and broken-hearted, got, without caring much for it, the boon of the few remaining years of his life from James III., the family of Douglas was the best known and most marked in the history of Scotland, and in daring conflicts alike on English and on French soil. On many a well-fought field

> "The Bloody Heart blazed in the van,
> Announcing Douglas, dreaded name."

The branch of Angus proved itself not unworthy, in vigour, power, and military capacity, of the earlier line. In the person of Gawin, the hereditary energy of the race sought an outlet partly in ecclesiastical and civil affairs—then simply a nearly continuous warfare—but more markedly, honourably, and lastingly in the sphere of high poetry. The father of Gawin Douglas was one of the most distinguished of the line. Styled the Great Earl, and known popularly as "Archibald Bell-the-Cat," from

the summary and tragic affair of Lauder Bridge, he was sagacious as he was brave. On the slopes of Flodden he urged the impetuous King not to risk a battle, but was met with scornful words. Withdrawing from the field, he returned home to die of grief in the Abbey of St Ninian's, in Galloway, a year after the disaster in which his two sons fell with two hundred gentlemen of his name and clan. Gawin, his son, was "incorporated" at St Andrews in 1489. He graduated in the Scottish University in 1494, and thereafter probably finished his education in the University of Paris. Entering the Church, he had the reversion of the presentation of the parsonage of Glenquhom (Glenholm), in Peeblesshire, in 1498, the manor of which is found in the possession of the Douglas family in 1496. It does not appear, however, that he ever resided there. He became parson of East Linton, and rector of Hauch* or Prestonkirk. He was made Provost of St Giles about 1501; appointed by the Queen Abbot of Aberbrothock, though the nomination was never formally completed, 1514; and finally he became Bishop of Dunkeld.

* Formerly supposed to be *Hawick*.

His life was passed mainly in a period of civil and ecclesiastical strife, the country being torn by intestine conflict through the contentions of his nephew Angus, and Albany—the heads of the English and French factions in the minority of James V. It is difficult for us now to form a correct opinion of the part he acted through those miserable transactions. Self-interest, family honour, some patriotism, and in the end considerable disgust with the tone and manners of the men around him, no doubt influenced the sensitive and imaginative poet. Finally, in London, bereft of his Church preferments and an exile, Douglas caught the infection of the plague, and died in the house of his friend Lord Dacre in September 1522, at the early age of 48. His tomb is in the church of the Savoy in the Strand—and in the inscription are the words "patria sui exul."

In 1501, the year in which he was appointed to the Provostship of St Giles, he finished 'The Palice of Honour,' and for some twelve years from this date he appears to have devoted himself freely to literature—probably the most genial and the happiest period of a troubled life. The translation of the Æneid of Virgil was completed

in July 1513. The work occupied eighteen months, but during two of these he was absorbed in business. This was the first metrical version of a Latin classic made into any British tongue. The battle of Flodden happened in the September following, and with this began the troubles of a life that should have had its outcome, not in civil and personal strife, but in imaginative and reflective energy. His father, who was Provost of Edinburgh at the time, had no doubt returned to the capital ere the news of the disaster reached it; and both father and son probably together learned the death of the King, the appalling slaughter of the nobility, including the Master of Angus and his brother, and the flower of the name of Douglas.

To each book of the Æneid Douglas prefixes a Prologue. Three of these — the Seventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth—are specially descriptive of scenery,—the scenery in all cases being of his own country. There was great courage in this, — the feeling that the sights and scenes of his own land were as worthy of the poet as anything in classical antiquity. These are wholly original poems, and, as appears to me, among the most characteristic and the most

interesting of his compositions. They show how intense his poetic heart was, and how true it beat to the impressions from the scenery of his native land. While greatly occupied and absorbed in Virgil, in foreign characters, associations, and scenes, in modes of life different altogether from those around him, his heart still turned to the days of May and June which he knew in his sojourn as a youth in the parsonage of East Linton and the lowlands of the Merse. Possibly in his soul there was a dim consciousness of something in these scenes which was as deep and powerful for him, though comparatively undeveloped, as anything in the foreign classic which he was seeking nobly to make present to his countrymen. This was comparatively a new thing in Scottish poetry—to pause, as on an object of imaginative delight, on the sights and sounds of early summer, and the varying months succeeding in bleak Scotland. Douglas loved them as objects of self-sufficing, independent interest. He might naturally have been wholly absorbed by the interest in the name, fame, and work of the classic, who was undoubtedly among the greatest powers of the age. Yet in this his art was

curiously anticipative; for in later times—in last century and in this—the writings which those interested in Scottish scenery probably prize the most are in the line of the Prologues of Gawin Douglas. These are, first, the pictures of Hamilton of Bangour, as it were the grey-streaked dawning of our modern descriptive art; and, secondly, the Introductions to the Cantos of 'Marmion,' which are simply the reflex, varied and enriched, of the Prologues of Douglas and the sketches of Hamilton. Those Introductions to 'Marmion,' not originally intended to be set there, but written as independent productions, are the truest, deepest, closest to the heart of Scottish scenery, of even all the wonderful poetical picturings of Scott.

But it is here necessary to say a word regarding the diction of Douglas. In the writings of Douglas especially, the old northern tongue—"northern lede"—which had been common to the north of England and the south of Scotland, began markedly to assume a character of its own; and Douglas was the first Scottish writer to apply the term "Scottis" to the language in which he wrote. "Inglis" was previously the prevailing word. His peculiarities are—(1) borrowing and Scotti-

cising Latin words: this he does inordinately, and to the detriment of the language; (2) largely borrowing French terms, almost without change; (3) adopting forms from Chaucer, and using the *y* prefix to the past participle—as *y-wymplit*, *y-bound*, &c., and also retaining the prefix *y* and dropping the termination—as *y-bore*, *y-clois*, &c., while in the northern dialect these were *boren*, *clos-it*, &c. The prefix *y* had been dropped from the northern dialect before the twelfth century.*

The diction of Douglas is, as has been recognised by Irving, Tytler, and others, much more obscure to a modern reader than that either of Henryson or Dunbar—even, I should say, of Barbour. This has not arisen simply from the copious adaptation of foreign words—chiefly Latin and French—in which he has indulged, and which cannot be said to add to the grace or idiomatic power of his language. It would rather appear to be the case that in the time of Douglas there "was a spoken Scottis," which had departed very considerably from the earlier form of the language, when it was a common

* See Small's *Douglas*, vol. i. p. 145—Introduction, and allusions there noted.

part of the northern dialect, known equally north and south of the Cheviots through the old kingdom of Northumbria. There it was called "Inglis" and the English tongue. This is tolerably clear from what Douglas himself tells us. He has abandoned the term Inglis or English as descriptive of the language in which he writes, and speaks of himself as—

[1] Keeping. [2] Southern.

"Kepand[1] na Soudron,[2] bot our awin language."

Then he adds—

"I speke as I lerned when I wos ane page."

This points very explicity to his having used the Court language or vernacular in which he was brought up.

He goes on, however, to excuse himself for introducing foreign words—

"Na yet sa clene all Sudroun I refuse,
But some worde I pronounce as nychboure dois;
Like as in Latine bene, grave terms sum,
So me behuffit[3] whilum,[4] or be dum,
Sum bastard Latyne, Frensche or Ynglis, ois;[5]
Quhare scant wes Scottis; I had nane uther chois:
Not that oure toung is in the selbin[6] skant,[7]
Bot for that I the fouth[8] of langage want."

[3] Behoved me. [4] Sometimes. [5] Use. [6] Same. [7] Scanty. [8] Plenty, copiousness.

Again he tells us—

"But sen[1] I follow the poete principall,
Quhat nedis purches[2] fenyeit[3] termes new?"

[1] Since.
[2] Procure.
[3] Feigned, coined.

While, no doubt, there was need and liberty for borrowing, it is clear that Douglas carried the liberty to licence; and certainly he has not clothed the new terms in comely form.

It strikes one as remarkable that, while the earlier poets — Barbour and Henryson — are really more intelligible to a modern reader than Dunbar and Douglas, the former were men born north of the Forth, the latter were in all probability of southern birth. Both were men brought up at the Court of Scotland, and daily familiar with the use of the Court language. These circumstances seem to point to a certain return to the vernacular of the Lothians, which in its original form was unquestionably the parent language of Scotland, and to a development in the language itself, not dependent on the changes taking place, south of the Cheviots. One external cause of this was doubtless the extreme hostility to England during the reigns of James III. and IV., notwithstanding the short-lived marriage of the latter

with Margaret Tudor, and the consequent exclusion of Scotsmen from English social and literary influences. It was at least in the time of Douglas that the "Scottis" or Scottish tongue was at its farthest remove from the "Inglis" or English, with which, before his time, it had so much in common. Possibly the patriotic genius and feeling of one of the Douglas line — the branch which was the type above all others of Scottish nationality from the time of the Good Sir James—had something to do with the intensified and pronounced difference.

In the Prologue to 'The Palice of Honour'—the earliest work of Douglas—there is a full and fine piece of description. There is the customary reference to the garden in May, as follows:—

"Quhen paill Aurora, with face lamentabil
Her russet mantill borderit all with sabill,
Lappit[1] about the hevinly circumstance,[2]
The tender bed and arres[3] honorabill
Of Flora, quene till[4] flouris amiabill,
In May I rais to do my observance,[5]
And enterit in a gardyne of plesance,
With sol[6] depaint as paradice amiabill,
And blessful bewis with blomed varyance.

[1] Embraced.
[2] Surroundings.
[3] Perhaps *array*.
[4] To, of.
[5] Homage, worship.
[6] Soil.

Sa craftely dame Flora had ouirfret[1]
Her hevinly bed, powderit with mony a set
Of ruby, topas, perle, and emerant,
With balmy dew bathit and kyndlie wet;
Quhill vapours hote, richt fresche, and weill ybet,[2]
Dulce of odour, of flevour maist fragrant,
The silver droppis on daseis distillant,
Quhilk[3] verdour branches ouir the alars yet,[4]
With smoky sence[5] the mystis reflectant.

[1] Overspread.
[2] Supplied—past part. of *bete*—AS. *betan*.
[3] Which.
[4] Gate overspread with alder—or perhaps elder, bourtree.
[5] Incense.

The fragrant flouris blomand in thair seis,[6]
Ouirspred the levis of natures tapestreis;
Abone the quhilk with hevinly harmoneis
The birdis sat on twystis[7] and on greis,[8]
Melodiously makand thair kyndlie gleis,
Quhais[9] schill noitis fordinnëd all the skyis,[10]
Of repercust[11] air the echo cryis
Amang the branches of the blomëd treis,
And on the laurers[12] silver droppis lyis.

[6] Seats, places.
[7] Twigs.
[8] On steps, one above the other.
[9] Whose.
[10] Filled all the skies with sound.
[11] Reverberated.
[12] Laurels.

Quhill that I rowmëd[13] in that paradice,
Replenischit, and full of all delice,[14]
Out of the sey[15] Eous alift his heid,
I mene[16] the hors quhilk drawis at device[17]
The assiltrie[18] and goldin chair of price[19]

[13] Roamed.
[14] Deliciousness.
[15] Sea.
[16] Mean.
[17] Appointment.
[18] Axletree.
[19] Precious golden chair.

Of Tytan, quhilk at morrow semis reid;
The new collour that all the nicht lay deid
Is restorit; baithe foullis, flouris, and rice[1]
Recomfort was, throw Phebus gudlyheid.[2]

The dasy and the maryguld unlappit,[3]
Quhilks[4] all the nicht lay with their levis happit,[5]
Thame to reserve[6] fra rewmes pungitive;[7]
The umbrate[8] treis that Tytan about wappit[9]
War portrait,[10] and on the eirth[11] yschappit[12]
Be goldin bemis vivificative,
Quhais amene[13] heit is maist restorative;
The greshoppers amangis the vergers[14] gnappit,[15]
And beis wrocht materiall for thair hyve.

Richt hailsome[16] was the sessoun[17] of the yeir,
Phebus furth yet[18] depured[19] bemis cleir,
Maist nutritive till all things vegetant.
God Eolus of wind list nocht appeir,[20]
Nor auld Saturne with his mortall speir[21]
And bad aspect contrair till[22] everie plant.
Neptunus nold[23] within that palice hant.[24]
The beriall stremis rynning men micht heir,
By bonkis grene with glancis variant."

The pale-faced dawn, the garden powdered

[1] Brushwood, perhaps branch—as originally.
[2] Goodly head, beneficent power.
[3] Unfolded.
[4] Which.
[5] Covered up.
[6] Preserve.
[7] Hurtful humours.
[8] Umbered, shadowed.
[9] Wrapped, folded.
[10] Portrayed.
[11] Earth.
[12] Shaped (past part.)
[13] Pleasant.
[14] Orchards.
[15] Cropped, ate—AS. *cnéopan*, *carpere*.
[16] Wholesome.
[17] Season.
[18] ȝet, poured.
[19] Purified.
[20] Inclined not to appear.
[21] Sphere.
[22] To.
[23] For *ne wolde*, would not.
[24] Use, frequent.

with many-coloured blooms, steeped in balmy dew and kindly moistened; warm and fragrant vapours rising; silver drops on the daisy, the verdant alders, the birds; the silver drops on the laurels; the sunrise bringing back the colour that all the night had lain dead; the opening of the daisy and the marigold, which had lain all night "happit" with their leaves to preserve the blooms from the hurtful "rewmes"; the trees wrapped round by the sun and shaped on the earth; the "gnapping" grasshoppers and the working bees; the absence of the winds and calm of the morning; above all, the beryl-like streams running within hearing, by their green banks, with their varied glancings, — together constitute a well-limned and detailed picture, not overdone.

The poet then addresses May, and thereafter, on the appearance of a dazzling gleam of light, falls down in a swoon. When he awakes, he says

"I thocht[1] me set within a desert place,
Amyd a forest by a hyddeous flude
With grysly fische, and schortly till conclude,
I sall discryve[2] (as God will give me grace),
Myne visioun in rurall termis rude."

[1] Thought.
[2] Describe.

In the description which follows, there opens on his vision the pageantry of the Court of Minerva, making its way to the Palace of Honour. The poet joins the procession, under the guidance of a nymph, and in the midst of the somewhat fantastic allegory, we find some charming touches of nature-painting. When the company reached "the Musis caballine fontane," * they alighted from their horses :—

"Our horses pasturit in ane plesand plane,[1]
Law[2] at the fute[3] of ane fair grene montane,[4]
Amid ane meid schaddowit with ceder treis,
Saif[5] fra[6] all heit, thar micht we weill remane.
All kinde of herbis, flouris, frute, and grane,
With everie growand tre thair men micht cheis,[7]
The beriall stremis rinand ouir stanerie greis[8]
Made sober noyis,[9] the schaw[10] dinnit agane[11]
For birdis sang, and sounding of the beis."

1 Plain.
2 Low.
3 Foot.
4 Mountain.
5 Safe.
6 From.
7 Choose.
8 Gravelly or stony steps or falls, one after another.
9 Soft noise.
10 Wood.
11 Resounded.

He adds :—

"The ladyis fair on divers instruments
Went playand, singand, dansand ouir the bentis,[12]
Full angellike and hevinlie was thair soun.
. . . . . .

12 Here open fields, originally a kind of grass.

* Hippocrene, fountain of the Muses, formed by Pegasus striking the ground with his feet.

Thair womanliness wryithit the elementis,[1]
Stoneist[2] the hevin, and all the earth adoun." *

The Prologue to the Twelfth Book contains the description of May :—

" As fresch Aurora, to mychty Tythone spous,
Ischit[3] of hir safron bed and evir[4] hous,
The crammysin[5] cled[6] and granit[7] violat,[8]
With sanguyne cape,[9] the selvage[10] purpurat,
Onschot the windois of hyr large hall,
Spred all wyth rosys, and full of balm ryall,[11]
And eik[12] the hevinly portis[13] crystallyne,
Upwarpis braid,[14] the warld to illumyn.
The twinkling stremouris[15] of the orient
Sched purpour sprangis[16] with gold and asure ment,[17]
Persand[18] the sabill barmkyn † nocturnall,
Bet[19] doun the skyis clowdy mantill wall :
Eous the steid, with ruby hamis[20] reid,
Abuf[21] the seyis[22] lyftis furth his heid,
Of cullour soyr,[23] and sum deill[24] broun as berry,
For to alichtyn[25] and glaid our emyspery,[26]
The flambe[27] outbrastyng[28] at his neys thyrlys."[29]

1 Charmed the elements.
2 Astonished.
3 Issued.
4 Ivory.
5 Crimosy, crimson-coloured cloth.
6 Clothed.
7 Dyed in grain of cochineal.
8 Violet.
9 Blood-coloured mantle.
10 Border, without hem.
11 Royal.
12 Also.
13 Gates.
14 Drives up wide.
15 Streamers, streams of light.
16 Stripes or streaks of different colours.
17 Mingled.
18 Piercing.
19 Beat.
20 Splints of horse-collars.
21 Above.
22 Seas.
23 Sorrel, reddish-coloured.
24 Somewhat.
25 Lighten up.
26 Hemisphere.
27 Flame.
28 Outbursting.
29 Nostrils, literally nose-piercings.

* *Palice of Honour.* Small, vol. i. p. 44.

† Literally, the outermost fortification of a castle—or rather wall round courtyard buildings.

At length Phœbus, the sun himself, appears, the misty vapours upspring, and he overspreads the ocean with glittering glance :—

"The large fludis lemand all of lycht."

It was a glory to behold :—

"The stabillit wyndis[1] and the cawmyt see,[2]
The soft sessoun, the firmament serene,
The lowne[3] illumynat air, and fyrth amene."[4]

The clear streams sprinkle for the heat, and—

"Forgane[5] thir stannyris[6] schane[7] the beriall strandis."[8]

Delightful Flora spreads her blooms under the feet of the bright steed of Phœbus; wood and forest shadow with their boughs the ground embroidered with "selcouth" (strange) hues. And—

"Towris,[9] turattis,[10] kyrnellis,[11] pynnaclis hie[12]
Of kirkis, castellis, and ilke[13] fair citë,
Stude payntit, every fyall,[14] fane,[15] and stage[16]
Apon[17] the plane grund,[18] by thar awin umbrage."[19]

1 Winds enstabled.
2 Calmed sea.
3 Calm, hushed—serene state of atmosphere.
4 Pleasant field.
5 Over against.
6 Gravel-beds along a river-side, the stones being smooth and water-worn.
7 Shone.
8 Here streams or flow of the river.
9 Towers.
10 Turrets.
11 Battlements.
12 Pinnacles high.
13 Each.
14 Round tower, cupola.
15 Vane on top of turret.
16 Storey of a house, literally stage or degree.
17 Upon.
18 Plain ground.
19 Own shadow.

The fresh braird revests the earth, and—

"Ive levis[1] rank ourspred the barmkin wall,[2]
The blomyt hawthorn cled[3] his pikis[4] all;
Furth of fresch burgionis[5] the wyne grapis ying[6]
Endlang[7] the treilyeis[8] dyd on twystis[9] hing.

. . . . . .

The dasy dyd on breid[10] her crownell smaill,[11]
And every flour onlappit[12] in the daill;[13]
In battill gyrs[14] burgionys[15] the banwart wyld,[16]
The clavyr,[17] catcluke,[18] and the cammamyld;[19]
The flour delice[20] furth spred his hevinly hew,
Flour dammes,[21] and columby blank and blew;[22]
Seyr downis[23] smaill on dent de lion[24] sprang
The ying grene blomyt straberry levis amang;
Gymp gerraflouris[25] thar[26] royn[27] levys unschet,[28]
Fresch prymros and the purpour violet;
The roys knoppis,[29] tetand furth thar heyd,[30]
Gan chyp,[31] and kyth[32] thar vermel[33] lippis red,
Crysp scarlet levis sum schaddand,[34] baith attanis[35]
Kest[36] fragrant smell amyd[37] from goldin granis;[38]

[1] Ivy leaves.
[2] Outside or courtyard wall of a tower.
[3] Clothed.
[4] Spikes, prickles.
[5] Sprouts.
[6] Wine-grapes young.
[7] Running along or endwise.
[8] Trellis.
[9] Twigs.
[10] Spread broad.
[11] Small coronet, *corolla.*
[12] Unfolded.
[13] Dale.
[14] Rich rank grass—AS. *batan*, to bait; Icel. *beit*, pasture.
[15] Burgeons, flourishes.
[16] Wild bane-wort (*Ranunculus flammula*): *ban, hurt, wyrt, plant.*
[17] Clover.
[18] Cat's-claw or bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*).
[19] Camomile.
[20] Fleur de lis.
[21] Damask roses—*Dammes*, of Damascus.
[22] Columbine, white and blue.
[23] Many heads of down.
[24] Dandelion.
[25] Slender neat gilliflowers.
[26] Their.
[27] Vermilion, roone leaves.
[28] Disclosed.
[29] Rosebuds.
[30] Shooting out their head.
[31] Embrace.
[32] Show.
[33] Vermeil.
[34] Dividing.
[35] At once.
[36] Cast.
[37] In the midst.
[38] Branches—Icel. *greina*, to divide.

Hevinly lylleis,[1] with lokerand toppis quhyte,[2]
Oppynnit[3] and schaw[4] thar creistis redymyte."[5]

[1] Lilies. [2] Curling white heads. [3] Opened. [4] Showed. [5] Their crests adorned.

Then we have references to the redolent odours, "Phebus red fowle," with his coral crest, "the paintyt poune" (peacock)—

"Schapand the prent of Argus hundreth ene,
. . . . . .
Harts through the thick wood shaw,
On leys littil lammis,
Full tait and trig[6] socht bletand[7] to thar dammis."

[6] Neat and trim. [7] Sought bleating.

"Tydy ky" (cows) low, "veilys" (calves) by them run; and—

"By rynnand strandis[8] Nymphis and Naedes,
Syk[9] as we clepe[10] wenchis and damysellis,
In gresy gravis[11] wandrand[12] by spring wellis,
Of blomyt branchis and flowris quhite and rede
Plettand[13] thar lusty chaiplettis for thar hede;—
Sum sing sangis,[14] dansis ledys,[15] and roundis,[16]
Wyth vocis schill, quhill all the daill resoundis;
Quharso[17] thai walk into thar caraling,[18]
For amorus lays doith all the rochis ryng."[19]

[8] Streams. [9] Such. [10] Call. [11] Moist groves. [12] Wandering. [13] Plaiting. [14] Songs. [15] Lead dances. [16] Round dances. [17] Wherever. [18] Wake to their carolling. [19] Rocks ring.

The description closes in a chorus of birds, who sing a welcome to the sun as lord of light and lamp of day:—

"The merll,[1] the mavis, and the nychtingale,
With mery notis myrthfully furth brest,[2]
Enforsing thame quha mycht do clynk[3] it best.
The cowschet[4] crowdis[5] and pirkis[6] on the rys,[7]
The styrlyng[8] changis divers stevynnys nys,[9]
The sparrow chyrmis in the wallis clyft,
Goldspynk[10] and lyntquhyte[11] fordynnand the lyft.[12]
The gukgo[13] galis,[14] and so quyteris[15] the quaill,[16]
Quhill ryveris rerdyt,[17] schawis, and every vaill,
And tender twystis[18] trymlyt[19] on the treis,
For byrdis sang and bemyng[20] of the beis.
In wrables dulce[21] of hevinly armonyis
The larkis, lowd releschand[22] in the skyis,
Lovys[23] thar lege[24] with tonys[25] curyus,
Baith to dame Natur and the fresch Venus."

1 Blackbird.
2 Burst.
3 Literally, to beat smartly, clink, join.
4 Cushat, ring-dove; also *kowschot.*
5 Coos.
6 Perches.
7 Twigs, brushwood.
8 Starling.
9 Delicate notes.
10 Goldfinch.
11 Lintwhite, linnet, lintie.
12 Filling the heaven with sound.
13 Cuckoo.
14 Word applied to note.
15 Warbles, twitters.
16 Quail.
17 Resounded.
18 Twigs.
19 Trembled.
20 Bumming.
21 Warbles sweet.
22 Bursting out freely in song—Fr. *relacher.*
23 Praise.
24 Liegelord.
25 Tones, notes.
26 Plumes.
27 Azure.

Towards the close of the Prologue itself, there is a beautiful picture of the dove:—

"Hir nek scho wrinklis, trasing mony fold,
With plomis[26] glitterand, asur[27] upon gold,
Rendring a cullour betwix grene and blew
In purpour glans of hevinly variant hew;
I meyn our awin native bird, gentill dow,
Syngand in hyr kind, *I come hidder to wow.*"

Tytler says of Douglas: "There is not that masterly clearness of outline and brilliancy of colouring in his grand groups—that power of keeping under all minor details—the perspective of descriptive poetry, which is necessary for the production of a strong and uniform effect. All is too much of equal size, crowded into the foreground; and the author loses his purpose in the indiscriminate prominence of his details."

This description of May, Douglas thought a piece of his best art—

"perll of May
I the entitill, crownit quhil Domisday."

Beautiful it is in many points, but, as a whole, it is an illustration of a serious lack of unity. The poet ranges over the whole sphere of heaven, sea, and earth—noting and cataloguing all, and more than all, that May can show, at dawn, sunrise, noon, and night. The description is certainly too crowded; there is little subordination of details, a decided lack of perspective. But it contains some perfect single pictures; and some of the lines taken by themselves, as well as many single epithets, are exceedingly powerful. The lists of flowers and of birds are very valuable as

showing the range of the poet's interest, and his habit of careful natural observation. The ivy overspreading the "barmkyn" is a fine touch; so is "the blomyt hawthorn" clothing "his pikis all." The trellised vines do not seem to be of this country, but possibly the reference is to some form of their artificial cultivation.

Douglas's range of observation and sympathy for nature extended to every season. Besides the descriptions already given, we have two striking pictures superior in finish and unity to any of his hitherto quoted. These are the pictures of an evening and morning in June, both occurring in the Prologue to the Thirteenth Book of the Æneid, that added by Mapheus Vigius:—

"Towart[1] the evin, amyd the summyris heyt,
Quhen in the Crab Appollo held his sete,
Durying the joyous moneth tyme of June,
As gone neir was the day, and suppar done,
I walkyt furth about the feildis tyte,[2]
Quhilkis[3] tho[4] replenist[5] stude full of delyte,
With herbis, cornis, catale and frute treis,
Plente of stoyr,[6] birdis and byssy beis
In amerant[7] medis fleand[8] est and west,
Efter[9] laubour to tak the nychtis rest.

[1] Toward.
[2] Quickly.
[3] Which.
[4] Then—AS. *tho.*
[5] Replenished.
[6] Store, provision.
[7] Emerald.
[8] Flying.
[9] After.

And as I blynkit[1] on the lift me by,
All byrnand reid[2] gan walxin[3] the evin sky:
The son enfyrit haill[4] as to my sycht,
Quhirlit[5] about his ball with bemis brycht,
Declynand fast towart the north in deyd;[6]
And fyry Phlegon, his dym nychtis steid,
Dowkyt[7] his heid sa deip in fludis gray
That Phebus rolls down under hell[8] away,
And Esperus in the west wyth bemis brycht
Upspringis, as forridar[9] of the nycht.*
Amyd the hawchis,[10] and every lusty vaill,[11]
The recent dew beginnis doun to scaill,[12]
To meys[13] the byrnyng[14] quhar the son had schine,[15]
Quhilk tho was to the neddir warld[16] decline:[17]
At every pilis[18] point and cornis croppis[19]
The techrys[20] stude, as lemand beriall[21] droppis,
And on the hailsum[22] herbis clene, but[23] wedis,
Lyke cristall knoppis[24] or small silver bedis.
The licht begouth to quynkill[25] owt and faill,
The day to dyrkyn,[26] decline, and devail;[27]
The gummis[28] rysis, donn fallis the donk rym,[29]
Baith heyr and thair scuggis[30] and schaddois dym.

1 Glanced.
2 Burning red.
3 Wax.
4 One mass of fire.
5 Whirled.
6 In dying.
7 Dipped, ducked.
8 Here probably the unseen, beyond sight.
9 Fore-rider.
10 Haughs.
11 Pleasant vale.
12 To be scattered abroad by falling down.
13 Mitigate, assuage.
14 Burning.
15 Shone.
16 Nether world.
17 Declined.
18 Pile, blade.
19 Tops.
20 Drops, spots.
21 Shining like beryl.
22 Wholesome.
23 Without.
24 Knobs, heads of a flower.
25 Twinkle.
26 Darken.
27 Descend, hurry downwards.
28 Mists.
29 Dank, wet rime.
30 Shades (hence also shelter).

* So Milton,—

"Hesperus that led the starry host rode brightest."

Upgois the bak[1] wyth hir pelit[2] ledderyn[3] flycht;
The lark discendis from the skyis hycht
Singand hyr compling sang,[4] eftyr hir gys,[5]
To tak hyr rest, at matin hour to rys.
Out our the swyre[6] swymmis the soppis[7] of mist,
The nycht furthspred hyr cloke with sabill lyst,[8]
That all the bewtie of the fructuus feyld
Was wyth the erthis umbrage clene ourheild;[9]
Baith man and beste, fyrth,[10] flude, and woddis wild,
Involvit in tha schaddois warrin sild.[11]
Still war the fowlis fleis[12] in the ayr,
All stoyr and catall seysit[13] in thar lair,[14]
And every thing, quharso thame likis best,
Bownis[15] to tak the hailsum nychtis rest
Eftir the days laubour and the heet.
Closs warin[16] all and at thar soft quyet,
But[17] sterage[18] or removing, he or sche,
Ouder[19] best, byrd, fysch, fowle, by land or se:
And schortlie, every thing that dois repare
In firth or feyld, flude, forest, earth or ayr,
Or in the scroggis,[20] or the buskis ronk,[21]
Lakis, marrasis,[22] or thir pulis donk,[23]
Astabillit liggis[24] still to slepe, and restis;
Be the small birdis syttand on thar nestis,

1 Bat.
2 Peeled.
3 Leathern.
4 Evensong at the last of the canonical hours (nine o'clock).
5 Guise, manner.
6 Neck or col of the hill.
7 Probably here piles or trailing wreaths—Icel. *soppur*, pile.
8 Hem.
9 Covered over, concealed.
10 Enclosed field.
11 Encompassed.
12 Flights.
13 Seated, lodged.
14 Place of rest.
15 Prepares.
16 Close were in.
17 Without.
18 Stir.
19 Either.
20 Stunted bushes or shrubs.
21 Bushes rank.
22 Morasses.
23 Dank pools.
24 Enstabled lie.

The litill midgeis, and the vrusum fleyis,[1]
Laboryus emmotis,[2] and the byssy beyis;
Als weill the wyld as the taym bestiall,
And every othir thingis gret and small
Owtak[3] the mery nychtgaill, Philomene,
That on the thorn sat syngand fra the splene[4]—
Quhais myrthfull notis langing for to heyr,
Ontill[5] a garth[6] undir a greyn lawrer[7]
I walk onon, and in a sege[8] down sat,
Now musand upon this and now on that.
I se the Poill,[9] and eik the Ursis brycht,
And hornit Lucyne castand bot dym licht,
Becaus the symmyr skyis schoyn so cleyr;
Goldin Venus, the mastres of the yeir,
And gentill Jove, with hir participate,
Thar bewtuus bemis sched in blyth estayt:
That schortly, thar as I was lenyt[10] doun
For nychtis silens, and this byrdis soun,
On slepit I slaid—quhar sone I saw appeyr
Ane agit man——"

1 Restless flies.
2 Emmets.
3 Except.
4 Heart.
5 Into.
6 Garden, enclosure.
7 Laurel.
8 Seat.
9 Pole-star.
10 Leaned.

This was the vision of Mapheus Vigius—

"And on his head of lawrer tre a croune
Lyke to sum poet of the auld fassoune."[11]

11 Fashion.

After a colloquy with Mapheus, in which the poet agrees to translate the Thirteenth Book into

"the vulgar leid," that like the rest it may be read and sung "our Albion ile," — the poet awakes and finds it morning:—

"I for feir awoik,
And blent[1] abowt to the north est weill far,
Saw gentill Jubar schynand, the day star,
And Chiron, clepit[2] the sing[3] of Saggittary,
That walkis[4] the symmirris nycht, to bed gan cary.
Yondyr doun dwynis[5] the evin sky away,
And upspringis the brycht dawing of day
Intill ane other place nocht far in sundir,[6]
That to behald was plesans, and half wondir:
Furth quynching[7] gan the starris, one be one,
That now is left bot Lucifer allone.
And forthirmor to blason this new day,
Quha mycht discrive[8] the byrdis blyssfull bay?
Belyve[9] on weyng the bissy lark upsprang,
To salus[10] the blyth morrow with hir sang:
Sone[11] our the fieldis schinis the lycht cleyr,
Welcum to pilgrym baith and lauborer:
Tyte[12] on his hynis[13] gaif[14] the grief[15] a cry,
Awaik on fut, go till our husbandry;
And the hird[16] calls furth upon his page,[17]
Do drive the catell to thar pasturage.

1 Glanced.
2 Named.
3 Sign.
4 Is awake during.
5 Dwines, fades.
6 Not far apart.
7 Quenching
8 Describe.
9 Immediately.
10 Salute.
11 Soon.
12 Quickly.
13 Hinds, peasants.
14 Gave.
15 Grieve,
farm-steward.
16 Herd, one who tends cattle.
17 Boy.

The hynnis[1] wyfe clepis[2] up Katheryn and Gill:
Ya, dame, sayd thai, God wait, wyth a gude will.
The dewy grene, pulderit[3] with daseis gay,
Schew on the sward a cullour dapill gray;
The mysty vapouris springand up full sweit,
Maist confortabill to glaid all mannis spreit.[4]
Tharto, thir byrdis singis in the schawis,
As menstralis playing, *The joly day now daws.*"[5] *

1 Hind's.
2 Calls.
3 Powdered, sprinkled.
4 Spirit.
5 Very ancient Scottish air, played usually by the town pipers as a *réveillé*.

This June evening of Douglas seems to me to be the best of his descriptions in point of truth, of observation, and purity of feeling, as well as of artistic finish. It is skilfully and clearly outlined; it proceeds naturally from point to point with the force of gradual disclosure; detail follows detail in ready and expectant transition; and the unity of impression left is perfect. These lines take the first rank in British descriptive poetry.

The picture of the morning is not so rich in details, but it too has a fine unity, and there are some remarkable felicities of portraiture and

* *Prologue to Thirteenth Book.* Small, vol. iv. p. 173.

diction. Aurora that wakes the summer's night, and the down dwining of the even sky; the bright dawning of the day close to where the even sky had passed away; the gradual quenching of the stars; the salute of the lark to the blithe morn,—are all admirable.

Douglas, when a youth of twenty-two, received the presentation in reversion of Glenholm—a lonely kirk in Upper Tweeddale. The incumbent then was still alive. Whether the youthful poet was ever actually settled there, or whether he even visited the place, cannot now be decided. Certain it is that he shows more familiarity with the aspects of the south of Scotland or Lowland scenery than any other poet up to his time, or even afterwards up to the date of Allan Ramsay. It was for long supposed that Douglas was rector of Hawick, but this now is said to be a mistake for Hauch or Prestonkirk, in East Lothian. His family of course had ample possessions in the south of Scotland, and this may have led him to be frequently there. In whatever way the knowledge was acquired, there can be no doubt that Douglas has given us pictures and lines which could have been written only by one who knew well and had brooded

over the Lowland landscape. It is true that we do not find in him, any more than in the others, reference to mountain height, bracken glen, or the moorland heather bloom, or the grace of the wayside gale, or the blue-bell. But he has got a long way beyond the garden-girth of the poetic conventionalism of the time. He is in his day pre-eminently the lover, the poet, of the running stream, and this such as we may see it any day in the glens of the Lammermoors, the Liddel, the Teviot, or the Tweed. I cannot but feel that, in some of his lines on the waters, he is thinking of what he saw by the braes of the Hermitage or on the haughs of Tweedside.

What more apt picture can we have of a Lowland water than in these lines?—

Beryl-like. "The beriall[1] stremis rynnand men micht heir
By bonkis grene with glancis variant."

Again:—

[2] Stony successive falls. "The beriall stremis rinnand ouir stanerie greis[2]
Made sober noyis."

This is a fine, true, and fresh touch. It exactly describes the look to eye and sound to ear of a Lowland stream. The beryl-like gleam

of the river falling gently with soft noise over stone after stone in mid-stream, is a picture taken direct from nature. Again :—

"Forgane thir stannyris schane the beriall strandis,"—

that is, over against the stretches of the smooth water-worn stones which run along the side or margin shone the beryl-like streams—a picture taken at first hand from the course of the larger Lowland rivers, with their spreading shingly margins. *Strand* is originally the bed of the river, hence applied to the flow in the river itself. *Strand* is still used in Scotland for the bed of the open sewer in a town. The other secondary application to margin or shore is obvious.

Then there are pictures and words taken directly from the aspects of the Lowland hills —that is, the lower heights—and from the designations peculiar almost to the valleys of the Tweed and the Yarrow—at least, to the southern district of Scotland. In the June evening we have the following :—

"Out owre the swyre swymmis the sops of mist,"—

that is, over the col or neck of the hill, where the summit dips and rises again on the other side, swim high before the vision the wreaths of mist. "Swyre" or "sware" is the characteristic word of the Tweed and Yarrow district especially, for the dip on the summit of the hill. There it still remains the legacy of the old Angle term (*sweor*), once familiar in its original application all over the area of the Lothian language.

Again Douglas speaks of Cynthia as—

"Maistres of stremis and glaider[1] of the nycht,
Schipmen and pilgrymmis hallowis[2] thi mycht,
Leman to Pan, dochtir[3] of Hyperione,
That slepand kist[4] the hird[5] Endymione." *

[1] Gladder.
[2] Regard as holy.
[3] Daughter.
[4] Kissed.
[5] Shepherd.

The "hird" is what now we may hear every day on Tweedside.

The Prologue to the Seventh Book contains the memorable description of the Scottish winter. It may be taken as completely typical of the kind of feeling for winter which pervades the whole of Scottish poetry to a time very near the present day—that, namely, of shivering repugnance, based on a severe literalism of view.

* *Prologue*, Book III. Small, vol. ii. p. 116.

In the picture, everything that is disagreeable to sense in our Scottish winter is noted and emphasised; on no feature does the poet dwell lovingly—neither purity nor gleam of snow, delicacy of frost-work tracery, the wide-spreading grace of the snowy landscape, the grandeur that is in the sweep of the storm—nothing, in fact, which now appeals to the sympathy of the higher imagination. The picture, withal, has most characteristic touches; it is true to a keen natural observation; though, artistically, it is a combination of features rather catalogued than composed. It is not the picture of a single winter's day, but rather a series of pictures applicable to different times during the season.

" The frosty regioun ringis [1] of the yeir,
The tyme and sessoune bitter cald and paill,
Thai schort days that clerkis clepe [2] brumaill; [3]
Quhen brym [4] blastis of the northyne art [5]
Ourquhelmit [6] had Neptunus in his cart,
And all to schaik [7] the levis of the treis,
The raging storm ourwalterand [8] wally seis; [9]
Reveris ran reid on spait [10] with watteir broune,
And burnis hurlis [11] all thair bankis downe,

[1] Reigns, prevails.
[2] Name.
[3] Brumal.
[4] Fierce.
[5] Quarter.
[6] Overwhelmed.
[7] Shake.
[8] Overriding.
[9] Wavy seas.
[10] Spate, flood.
[11] Forcibly throw.

And landbrist [1] rumland [2] rudely wyth sic beir,[3]
So loud ne [4] rummist [5] wyld lioun or beir.[6]
Fludis monstreis,[7] sic as [8] meirswyne [9] or quhailis,[10]
For the tempest law [11] in the deip devallyis,[12]
Mars occident, retrograide in his speir,[13]
Provocand [14] stryff,[15] regnit [16] as lord that yeir;
Rany Orioune wyth his stormy face
Bewalit [17] of the shipman by his rays;
Frawart [18] Saturne, chill of complexioune,
Throw quhais [19] aspect derth [20] and infectioune
Bene [21] causit oft, and mortale pestilens,
Went progressive the greis of his ascens; [22]
And lusty [23] Hebe, Junois douchtir [24] gay,
Stud spulyeit [25] of hir office and array.
The soil ysowpit [26] into wattir wak,[27]
The firmament ourkest [28] with rokis blak,[29]
The ground fadyt,[30] and fauch [31] wolx [32] all the feildis,
Montayne toppis sleikit [33] wyth snaw ourheildis,[34]
On raggit rolkis [35] of hard harsk [36] quhyne stane,[37]
With frosyne [38] frontis [39] cauld clynty [40] clewis [41] schane; [42]

1 Landburst, landslip of the bank of the stream.
2 Rumbling.
3 Roar.
4 Ne'er.
5 Bellowed.
6 Bear.
7 Monstrous floods.
8 So that.
9 Porpoise.
10 Whales.
11 Low.
12 Descend.
13 Sphere.
14 Provoking.
15 Strife.
16 Reigned.
17 Bewailed.
18 Contrary.
19 Through whose.
20 Dearth.
21 Are.
22 Ascended in progression, step after step.
23 Delightful.
24 Daughter.
25 Despoiled, robbed.
26 Steeped.
27 Moist, watery.
28 Overcast.
29 Black fogs, rouks.
30 Faded.
31 Dun.
32 Waxed.
33 Covered.
34 Are covered over.
35 Ragged rocks.
36 Harsh, sharp.
37 Whinstone, greywacke.
38 Frozen.
39 Faces.
40 Stony.
41 Cleughs.
42 Shone.

Bewtie wes lost, and barrand schew the landis,
With frostis haire[1] ourfret[2] the feildis standis.
Soure better bubbis,[3] and the schouris snell,
Semyt[4] on the sward ane similitude of hell,
Reducing[5] to our mynd, in every steid,[6]
Goustly schaddois[7] of eild and grisly deid.[8]
Thik drumly scuggis[9] dirkinit so the hevyne.[10]
Dym skyis[11] oft furth warpit[12] feirfull levyne,[13]
Flaggis of fyir,[14] and mony felloun flawe,[15]
Scharp soppis of sleit,[16] and of the snypand snawe.[17]
The dowy dichis[18] war all donk and wait,[19]
The law vaille[20] flodderit all wyth spait,[21]
The plane stretis[22] and every hie way
Full of fluschis,[23] doubbis,[24] myre and clay.
Laggerit leys[25] wallowit farnys schewe,[26]
Broune muris kithit[27] thair wysnit mossy hewe,[28]
Bank, bra, and boddoum[29] blanschit wolx and bair;[30]
For gurll weddir[31] growyt bestis haire;[32]
The wynd made wayfe[33] the reid weyd on the dyk,[34]
Bedovin[35] in donkis deyp[36] was every syk;[37]

1 Hoar-frosts.
2 Fretted over.
3 Sour bitter blasts, gusts.
4 Seemed.
5 Recalling.
6 Place.
7 Ghastly shadows.
8 Old and grisly dead.
9 Thick mud-coloured shadows, clouds the colour of water in flood.
10 So darkened the heaven.
11 Dun skies.
12 Cast forth.
13 Lightning.
14 Flashes of fire.
15 Dreadful arrow.
16 Sharp clouds of sleet.
17 Nipping, biting snow.
18 Dreary ditches.
19 Dank and wet.
20 Low valley.
21 Overflowed, was flooded in spate.
22 Plain streets.
23 Overflow, slush.
24 Dubs.
25 Bemired leas, fields.
26 Showed withered or yellowed ferns.
27 Brown muirs showed.
28 Wizened mossy hue.
29 Bottom, hollow.
30 Grew white and bare.
31 Boisterous, surly weather, sky.
32 Beasts grew hoary.
33 The wind waved, shook.
34 Reed-weed on the bank or baulk between two fields.
35 Besmeared—Ruddiman.
36 In dankness deep.
37 Small stream flowing through marsh.

Our craggis,[1] and the front of rochis seyre,[2]
Hang gret isch schoklis[3] lang as ony spere;[4]
The grund stude barrand,[5] widderit,[6] dosk[7] and gray,
Herbis, flouris, and gersis[8] wallowit[9] away;
Woddis, forestis,[10] wyth nakit bewis blout,[11]
Stud strypyt[12] of thair weyd[13] in every hout.[14]
So bustuysly[15] Boreas his bugill blew,
The deyr[16] full dern[17] doune in the dalis drew;
Smal byrdis, flokand throw thik ronnis[18] thrang,
In chyrmyng * and with cheping[19] changit thair sang,
Sekand hidlis[20] and hirnys[21] thaim to hyde[22]
Fra feirfull thudis[23] of the tempestuus tyde.[24]
The wattir lynnis routtis,[25] and every lynde[26]
Quhyslyt[27] and brayt[28] of the swouchand wynde.[29]
Puire[30] laboraris and byssy[31] husband men
Went wayt[32] and wery[33] draglyt[34] in the fen;
The silly[35] scheip and thair lytill hyrd gromis[36]
Lurkis[37] undir le[38] of bankis, wodys, and bromys.

. . . . . .

1 Crags, craigs. 2 Sere. 3 Icicles. 4 Spear. 5 The ground stood barren. 6 Withered. 7 Dusky. 8 Grasses. 9 Withered. 10 Woods. 11 Forsaken, bare. 12 Stood stripped. 13 Clothing. 14 Holt, wood. 15 Terribly. 16 Deer. 17 Secretly. 18 Shrubs or brushwood—as brambles, briers. 19 Cheeping. 20 Seeking hiding-places. 21 Corners. 22 Hide. 23 Blows, blasts. 24 Time, season. 25 The linns roar. 26 Lime-tree, linden. 27 Whistled. 28 Brayed. 29 Soughing wind. 30 Poor. 31 Busy. 32 Wet. 33 Weary. 34 Bedraggled. 35 Simple, innocent. 36 Shepherd boys. 37 Lurk. 38 Shelter, lee side—that is, side opposite to the wind.

* *Chirming*, low or mournful note of birds, as before a storm or in distress.

Widequhair[1] with fors[2] so Eolus schouttis schyll
In this congelyt[3] sessioune scharp and chyll,
The callour air[4] penetrative and puire[5]
Dasyng[6] the bluide in every creature,
Maid seik warm stovis, and beyne[7] fyris hoyt,[8]
In double garmont cled and wyly coyt,*
Wyth mychty drink, and meytis confortive,[9]
Agayne[10] the stormy wynter for to strive.

1 Far and wide.
2 Force, violence.
3 Frozen.
4 Free fresh air—here perhaps cold, as Icel. *kaldr.*
5 Pure.
6 Benumbing.
7 Well supplied with material.
8 Hot, warm.
9 Comforting meats.
10 Against.

The poet retires to rest, and in the night—

"Hornit Hewbade,[11] quhilk clepe[12] we the nycht owle,
Within hir caverne hard I schowt and yowle;[13]
Laithlie of forme,[14] wyth crukit camschow beik,[15]
Ugsum[16] to heir was hir wyld elriche screik:[17]
The wyld geis[18] claking eik[19] by nychtis tyde[20]
Attoure[21] the citie fleand[22] hard I glyde."

11 The horned owl—other reading, "the horned byrd."
12 Which we call.
13 Howl, yell.
14 Loathsome in form.
15 Crooked, distorted beak.
16 Frightful, abhorrent.
17 Wild, preternatural screech.
18 Geese.
19 Also.
20 In the night time.
21 Over and above.
22 Flying.

The morning comes:—

"On slummyr[23] I slaid[24] full sad, and slepit sownd
Quhill[25] the oriyont[26] upwart gan rebound.

23 Slumber.
24 Slid.
25 Until.
26 Orient.

* A short jacket worn under the vest in winter: also *sark coat*, that is, nearest the shirt, called *wyly* because not seen.—Ruddiman.

Phebus crownit byrd, the nychtis orloger,[1]
Clappand his wyngis thryse[2] had crawin[3] cleir.
Approching neir the greiking[4] of the day,
Within my bed I waikynnit quhair I lay,
So fast declinis Synthea the mone,
And kais keklis[5] on the ruiff[6] abone.
Palamedes byrdis * crouping in the sky,
Fleand on randoune[7] schapin[8] lik an Y,
And as ane trumpat rang their vocis soun,[9]
Quhais[10] cryis bene[11] pronosticatioun
Off wyndy blastis and ventositeis.
Fast by my chalmer,[12] in heych wisnit treis,[13]
The soir gled[14] quhislis[15] loud wyth mony ane pew,[16]
Quhairby the day was dawin[17] weil I knew;
Bad beit[18] the fyire and the candill alycht,
Syne blissit me, and in my weydis dycht[19]
Ane schot wyndo[20] unschet a lytill on char,[21]
Persawit[22] the morning, bla,[23] wan, and har,[24]
Wyth cloudy gum[25] and rak[26] ourquhelmyt[27] the air,

1 The clock of night.
2 Thrice.
3 Crowed.
4 Grey dawning.
5 Jackdaws cackle.
6 Roof.
7 Flying swiftly and forcibly.
8 Shaped.
9 Voices' sound.
10 Whose.
11 Are.
12 Chamber.
13 High withered trees.
14 Sore, complaining kite.
15 Whistles.
16 The note of the gled—melancholy or complaining.
17 Dawning.
18 Replenish.
19 Clothes dressed.
20 Projected window.
21 Opened a little ajar.
22 Perceived.
23 Bleak.
24 Grey, hoary.
25 Mist.
26 Fog.
27 Overwhelmed.

* "The cranes, when they fly in a body, resemble the letter Y, and are called Palamede's birds because they are said to have given him occasion of inventing his four letters in the time of the Trojan War."—Ruddiman.

The soulye[1] stythlie,[2] hasart,[3] rowch,[4] and hair,[5]
Branchis brattlyng,[6] and blayknit schew the brays,[7]
Wyth hirstis[8] harsk[9] of waggand[10] wyndil-strays;[11] *
The dew droppis congelyt on stibyll[12] and rynd,[13]
And scharp hailstanis, mortfundit of kynd,[14]
Hoppand[15] on the thak[16] and on the causay by,
The schot[17] I clossit and drew inwart[18] in hy,[19]
Chiverand[20] for cauld, the sessoun was so snell;
Schup[21] wyth hait flambe[22] to fleme[23] the fresyng fell."[24]

1 Soil.
2 Rigid.
3 Grey.
4 Rough.
5 Hoary.
6 Clattering, clashing together, as in confused noise.
7 Blackened appeared the braes.
8 Bare hard summit of a hill.
9 Rough, harsh.
10 Wagging.
11 Smooth-crested grass.
12 Stubble.
13 Rind of trees.
14 Cold as death.
15 Hopping.
16 Thatch.
17 Window.
18 Inwards.
19 Haste.
20 Shivering.
21 Endeavoured.
22 Hot flame.
23 Expel.
24 Sharp frost.

The poet then seeing Virgil on a lectern, resumes his task of translation at the Seventh Book:—

"Full laith[25] to leve our werk,[26] swa in the myre,
Or yit to stynt[27] for byttir storme or rane." †

25 Loath.
26 Work.
27 Stop, be arrested.

Those bright and moving pictures are direct

* Especially when the stalks are dry — Saxon, *windel-streow*, wheat or oaten straw.

† *Prologue to Seventh Book.* Small, vol. iii. p. 74 *et seq.*

from nature, and they have a completeness and finish which the main description of winter does not possess. The owl, the sound of the wild geese flying over the city, are very characteristic. Then in the morning the cock clapping his wings and crowing; "the greiking of the day"—that is, the growing to the grey of the morning; the keckling of the "jackdaws" on the roof above; the trumpet-sound of the flight, in Y-like shape, of the cranes over the city; the gled pewing in the withered trees, —are all strokes at first hand, and bring the scene before us with a real presence.

CHAPTER X.

NATIONAL POETS OF THE STUART PERIOD: SIR DAVID LYNDSAY.

(1490–1557.)

Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount (1490-1557) is one of the most interesting and picturesque figures in Scottish history. Scott has limned him in 'Marmion,' in a picture as true to reality as it is perfect in point of vivid art. From the date of the 'Dreme' (1528) to the appearance of the 'Monarchie' (1553), and the time of his death in 1557, Lyndsay was one of the greatest powers then at work in changing and moulding the mind of the people, and leading on to the new state of political and religious feeling, which after his death culminated in the Scottish Reformation.

He was born, it is supposed, at The Mount,

the property of his ancestors, near Cupar, in Fife. The old mansion-house stood on the south side of the hill, overlooking the greater part of the valley of the Eden. He was probably educated at St Andrews, where the name of "Da. Lindesay" appears as an "incorporated" student in 1508-9. This would imply that he entered the university in 1505. Like Dunbar, he followed the fortunes of the Court. Very early in life (1512), he became servitor or gentleman-usher to the youthful Prince, afterwards James V. Lyndsay was present in the Church of St Michael on the memorable occasion of the appearance of the strange and weird visitor, so graphically depicted by Pitscottie. The king was at even prayers. Suddenly at evensong, the figure of a man clad in blue gown, bald, but with long red-yellow hair behind flowing down to his shoulders, with a great pike-staff in his hand, passed through the worshippers, paused before the king sitting in his desk, and addressed him in words of solemn warning against the proposed expedition to England which ended in Flodden. The figure then disappeared as mysteriously as it had come, leaving the king and spectators in wonder and awe. Of this

scene Lyndsay was an eyewitness, and related the incident to George Buchanan. It has been surmised, indeed, that Lyndsay knew more of the history of the apparition than he cared to tell Buchanan. This does not, however, appear from Buchanan's words to have been the impression made on the historian himself. Possibly enough it was an arranged appeal to the superstitious side of the curiously mixed character of James IV.

Lyndsay continued as usher and companion to the youthful James V. after the catastrophe of Flodden. Flodden field was disastrous to Scotland, through the number and personal importance of the dead left on the slopes of that last fatal spur of the Cheviots;—but its political consequences were even more lasting and hurtful. It left a boy king, whose person was to be fought for by rival factions of the barons, that the one might crush the power of the other. As usual in Scottish story, the moment the hand of the supreme government became weak, the other power in the State—the baronage—broke into factions in a struggle for the mastery. As yet the people had no place or control. The religious hierarchy

was simply selfish, grasping, and corrupt. Between the factions the people of the country went to the wall, experiencing all the miseries of anarchy, oppression, and misgovernment. After "Flowdoun Field," Policy—that is, good government—and Justice, as it was phrased, fled the land. In their place were "Wilful Wrong," "Singular Profit" (Selfishness), Flattery, Treason, and Murder.*

The corruption of justice was paralleled, if not surpassed, by the corruption of the Church. Among the prelates there was a selfish grasping of pluralities and tithes, accompanied with non-residence and profligacy. Ignorance and evil living characterised the priests. The people were shut out from access to the Scriptures—indeed, could not have read them had they been within their reach. Throughout the whole country, life and property were insecure. The state of the Border Land, ravaged by Lord Dacre,—towers burned, and labour silenced, all through the principal valleys,—for the gratification of the puissant Henry VIII., was never more pitiable, even in the course of its melancholy history. When "Common Thift" stood

* See Lyndsay, *passim*.

on the gallows, in the 'Satyre of the Thrie Estates,' Lyndsay makes him invite others equally guilty as he to take their places beside him. It can hardly be doubted that he had Henry VIII. in his mind, when he makes the culprit say—

"Cum follow me all catyfe covetous kings,
Reavers, bot right,[1] of uthirs[2] realms and ringis."[3]

[1] Without right.
[2] Others.
[3] Kingdoms.

This was the scene on which Lyndsay was cast as a young man. The faction of the Douglases under Angus got the upper hand in 1524, when Lyndsay was dismissed from his post in connection with the king. He was allowed a small pension. The poet in his retirement at his house of Garmylton, near Haddington, produced 'The Dreme,' the first of his works, in 1528. This was followed in 1529 by 'The Complaynt to the King,' and in 1530 by 'The Testament and Complaynt of the Papyngo' (Parrot). The king having escaped from the control of the Douglases in 1528, Lyndsay was appointed Lyon King at Arms—that is, Chief Herald of Scotland—and received the honour of knighthood. Thereafter, in virtue

of his office, he served on several foreign embassies, and with distinguished success. 'The Satyre of the Thrie Estates' was, according to Laing, first represented at Linlithgow in 1539-40. 'The Tragedie of the Cardinall' followed in 1547, shortly after the assassination of Beaton. 'The Historie and Testament of Squyer Meldrum' was written at least after 1533—certainly one of the most interesting and touching of his writings. In 1553, four years before his death, he completed 'The Monarchie; or, Ane Dialog betwix Experience and ane Courteour,'—his longest and most elaborate work.

Sir David Lyndsay's poetical writings are distinctly a creation and inspiration of their time, as far as the influence of an age can act on a poet. They are truly national in character, subject, and fibre. They are directed mainly against the almost inexpressible abuses in the State and Church of his time; they breathe a true patriotism; and they show the author to have been a man of noble feeling, fearless, and of a high sense of honour. Often disfigured by coarseness they certainly are; but these are simply the literalisms of a coarse and vulgar

age. They served to create and foster in the mind of the people, through their substance and artistic form, that strong repugnance to the abuses and unworthinesses in the political and religious life of the age, which gave nerve and impulse to the great Reformation effort. No poet in Scotland had previously acquired an ascendancy over the minds of the general mass of the people in his own day, and for several generations following, equal to that of Sir David Lyndsay. The recent introduction of printing into Scotland no doubt helped this ascendancy. Fourteen editions of his works were printed in fifty-six years. But his power lay in the fact that he was poet, patriot, and political teacher in one. Hence—

> "The flash of that satiric rage
> Which, bursting on the early stage,
> Branded the vices of the age,
> And broke the keys of Rome."

No institution could possibly continue to live as before after the withering sarcasm and profound moral strain of the 'Satyre of the Thrie Estates.' And since the time of Lyndsay, no poet has had an influence on the com-

mon people of Scotland equal to his, except Robert Burns. Yet they are different. For while Burns expresses, elevates, idealises the joys and sorrows, the interests and scenes, of everyday life, which Scotchmen of all ranks know and recognise, Lyndsay caught, deepened and concentrated the tide of moral earnestness and conviction which was rising in the national heart, the outcome of which we see in the Scottish character, political and religious, of the last three centuries. This is none the less true, although Lyndsay did not live to see the Reformation completed, and did not himself actually leave the communion of the Church of Rome. The one thing to be regretted amid the results of the great forces at work in the Reformation period is, that the spirit of Sir David Lyndsay did not remain to penetrate, moderate, and conserve what was best in the forms, the architecture, the poetry, and the culture of the old religion and the old historic life. We cannot conceive even the ardent poet so far forgetting what was due to the past, and the ideal of the imagination, as to break and deface sacred altar, arch, tomb, tracery, and pinnacle — what is good, pure, beautiful in itself—merely because it

had accidentally acquired repulsive associations, through the misconduct of a passing and unfaithful priesthood.

Lyndsay, while powerful in satire and dramatic delineation, is distinctly inferior both to Dunbar and Douglas, and even to Henryson, in the picturing of outward nature. He has evidently modelled his descriptions on those of Dunbar and Douglas, but they are not equal in power or observation to the work of the preceding poets. Several of his best lines are, moreover, borrowings or adaptations from his predecessors, especially Dunbar. But if Lyndsay shows less variety, and on the whole less originality of observation, his pictures have, as a rule, greater finish and unity. This is especially true of the description of the summer evening at the close of 'The Monarchie' ('Experience and ane Courteour').* There is in this an appreciable progress in the descriptive art; it has more of the modern spirit, and, it may be added, the language of Lyndsay approaches much nearer modern English in diction and inflexion than that of Dunbar or Douglas.

* *Works*, vol. iii. p. 168.

Summer Morning.

"And so befell, in tyll ane myrthfull morrow,
In to my garth[1] I past me to repose,
This bird and I, as we wer wount aforrow:[2]
Amang the flouris fresche, fragrant, and formose.[3]
My vitale spretis[4] dewlie did rejose,[5]
Quhen Phebus rose, and rave[6] the cloudis sabyll,
Throuch brychtnes of his bemys amyabill.

Without vapour was weill purificate
The temperat air, soft, sober, and serene;
The Erth, be Nature, so edificate[7]
With holsum[8] herbis, blew, quhyte, reid, and grene;
Quhilk elevate my spreitis from the splene.[9]
That daye, Saturne, nor Mars, durst nocht[10] appeir,
Nor Eole,[11] of his cove[12] he durst nocht steir.[13]

That daye perforce behuffit[14] to be fair,
Be influence and cours celestiall:
No planete preisit[15] for to perturbe the air:
For Mercurius, be movyng naturall,
Exaltit wes, in to the throne tryumphall

[1] Garden.
[2] Wont before.
[3] Fair, beautiful.
[4] Spirits.
[5] Rejoice.
[6] Tore asunder.
[7] Furnished.
[8] Wholesome.
[9] Heart.
[10] Not.
[11] Eolus.
[12] Cave.
[13] Move.
[14] Was compelled.
[15] Pressed.

Of his mansioun, unto the fyftene gre,[1]
In his awin soverane signe of Virginee.

That daye did Phebus plesandlie depart
Frome Geminie, and enterit in Cancer;
That daye Cupido did extend his dart;
Venus, that daye, conjunit[2] with Jupiter;
That daye Neptunus hid hym, lyke one sker;[3]
That daye dame Nature, with gret besynes,[4]
Fortherit[5] Flora to keyth[6] hir craftynes,[7]

And retrograde wes Mars in Capricorne;
And Cynthia in Saggitar asseisit;[8]
That daye dame Ceres, goddes of the corne,
Full joyfullie Johne Uponland[9] appleisit;[10]
The bad aspect of Saturne wes appeisit,[11]
That daye, be Juno, of Jupiter the joye,
Perturband spreitis[12] causyng to hauld coye.[13]

The sound of birdis surmontit[14] all the skyis,
With melodie of notis musycall;
The balmy droppis of dew Tytane updryis,[15] *
Hyngande[16] upone the tender twystis[17] small.
The hevinlie hew, and sound angelicall,

[1] Fifteenth degree.
[2] Conjoined.
[3] On scare, fright.
[4] Activity.
[5] Furthered.
[6] Show.
[7] Skill.
[8] Settled.
[9] Upland, Upaland, Upeland; John or Jok the farmer, or rustic.
[10] Pleased.
[11] Appeased.
[12] Disturbing spirits.
[13] To hold quiet.
[14] Surmounted.
[15] Updries.
[16] Hanging.
[17] Twigs.

* So Dunbar.

Sic perfyte plesour[1] prentit[2] in myne hart,
That with gret pyne,[3] frome thyne I mycht depart." *

[1] Perfect pleasure. [2] Imprinted. [3] Pain.

The following is the picture of a June evening:—

"Of our talkeing[4] now latt[5] us mak ane end.
Behald quhow[6] Phebus dounwart[7] dois discend,
Towart[8] his palyce in the Occident.
Dame Synthea,[9] I se,[10] scho dois pretend
In tyll hir wattry regioun tyll ascend,
With vissage paill, up frome the Orient.
The dew now donkis[11] the rosis redolent:
The mareguildis,[12] that all day wer rejosit
Of Phebus heit, now craftelly ar closit.[13]

[4] Talking. [5] Let. [6] Behold how. [7] Downward. [8] Towards. [9] Cynthia. [10] See. [11] Moistens, danks. [12] Marigolds. [13] Skilfully are closed.

The blysfull byrdis bownis[14] to the treis,
And ceissis[15] of thare hevinlye armoneis:
The cornecraik in the crofte,[16] I heir hir cry;
The bak,[17] the howlat,[18] febyll of thare eis,[19]
For thair pastyme, now in the evenyng fleis;[20]
The nychtyngaill, with myrthfull melody
Hir natural notis persith[21] throw the sky,

[14] Repair. [15] Cease. [16] Cultivated field or land. [17] Bat. [18] Owl. [19] Feeble in their eyes. [20] Fly. [21] Pierce.

* *The Complaynt of the Papyngo.* *Works*, Laing, vol. i. p. 65 *et seq.*

Tyll [1] Synthea, makand hir observance,[2]
Quhilk [3] on the nycht dois tak hir dalyance.[4]

[1] To.
[2] Honour, worship
[3] Which.
[4] Dalliance.

I se Pole Artike [5] in the North appeir,
And Venus rysing, with hir bemis cleir:
Quharefor, my SONNE, I hald it tyme to go." *

[5] The polar star.

The Prologue to the 'Dialog betwix Experience and ane Courteour' is very powerful in its moral tone, and nowhere has the poet risen to a higher range of descriptive writing:—

"Musing and marvelling on the miserie
Frome day to day in erth quhilk dois incres,
And of ilk stait the instabilitie
Proceding of the restless besynes
Quhare on the most part doith thair mynd addres
Inordinatlie, on houngrye covatyce,[6]
Vaine glore,[7] dissait,[8] and uther sensuall vyce:

[6] Hungry covetousness.
[7] Vainglory.
[8] Deceit.

Bot tumlyng [9] in my bed I mycht nocht lye;
Quharefore I fuir [10] furth, in ane Maye mornyng,
Conforte [11] to gett of my malancolye,
Sumquhat affore [12] fresche Phebus uprysing,
Quhare I mycht heir the birdis sweitlie syng:

[9] Tumbling.
[10] Went.
[11] Comfort.
[12] Somewhat before.

* *Experience and ane Courteour. Works*, vol. iii. p. 168.

In tyll[1] ane park I past, for my plesure,
Decorit[2] weill be craft[3] of dame Nature.

Quhow I ressavit[4] confort naturall
For tyll descryve[5] at lenth[6] it war too lang;
Smelling the holsum herbis medicinall,
Quhare on[7] the dulce and balmy dew down dang,[8]
Lyke aurient peirles[9] on the twistis[10] hang;[11]
Or quhow[12] that the aromatik odouris
Did proceid frome the tender fragrant flouris;

Or quhow Phebus, that king etheriall,
Swyftlie sprang up in to the Orient,
Ascending in his throne imperiall,
Quhose brycht and beriall[13] bemes resplendent
Illumynit all on to the Occident,
Confortand[14] everye corporall creature
Quhilk formit war,[15] in erth, be dame Nature;

Quhose donke[16] impurpurit[17] vestiment nocturnall,
With his imbroudit[18] mantyll matutyne,
He lefte in tyll his regioun aurorall,
Quhilk on hym waitit quhen he did declyne
Towarte[19] his Occident palyce vespertine,[20]

1 In to.
2 Decorated.
3 Skill.
4 How I received.
5 Describe.
6 Length.
7 Whereon.
8 Down driven.
9 Orient pearls.
10 Twigs.
11 Hung.
12 How.
13 Beryl-like.
14 Comforting.
15 Which were formed.
16 Moist.
17 Empurpled, rosy.
18 Embroidered.
19 Towards.
20 Of the evening—also western.

And rose in habyte gaye and glorious,
Brychtar nor[1] gold or stonis precious.

[1] Brighter than.

Bot Synthea,[2] the hornit[3] nychtis quene,
Scho loste hir lychte and lede ane lawar saill,[4]
Frome tyme hir soverane lorde that scho had sene,[5]
And in his presens waxit dirk and paill,[6]
And ouer hir visage kest[7] ane mistye vaill;[8]
So did Venus, the goddès amorous,
With Jupiter, Mars, and Mercurius.

[2] Cynthia.
[3] Horned.
[4] Lower sail.
[5] Seen.
[6] Waxed dark and pale.
[7] Cast.
[8] Misty veil.

Rycht so the auld[9] intoxicat[10] Saturne,
Persaving[11] Phebus powir, his beymes brycht,
Abufe[12] the Erth than[13] maid he no sudgeourne,[14]
Bot suddandlye did lose his borrowit lycht,
Quhilk[15] he durst never schaw[16] bot on the nycht.
The Pole Artick,[17] Ursis,[18] and Sterris[19] all
Quhilk situate ar in the Septentrionall,[20]

[9] Old.
[10] Poisoned.
[11] Perceiving.
[12] Above.
[13] Then.
[14] Sojourn.
[15] Which.
[16] Show.
[17] Polar star.
[18] Ursa, bear.
[19] Stars.
[20] North.

Tyll[21] errand[22] schyppis quhilks are the souer gyde,[23]
Convoyand[24] thame upone the stormye nycht,
Within thare frostie circle, did thame hyde.

[21] To.
[22] Wandering, bent on a voyage.
[23] Sure guide.
[24] Convoying.

Howbeit that sterris have none uthir lycht
Bot the reflex of Phebus bemes brycht, *
That day durst none into the hevin appeir,
Till he had circuit[1] all our Hemispheir.

[1] Made the circuit of.

Me thocht[2] it was ane sycht celestiall,
To sene[3] Phebus so angellyke ascend
In till his fyrie chariot triumphall,
Quhose bewtie brychte I culd nocht comprehend.
All warldlie cure[4] anone did fro me wend,
Quhen fresche Flora spred furth hir tapestrie,
Wrocht[5] be dame Nature, quent[6] and curiouslie

[2] Methought.
[3] See.
[4] Worldly care.
[5] Wrought.
[6] Quaint.

Depaynt with mony hundreth hevinlie hewis;
Glaid[7] of the rysing of thare royall Roye,[8]
With blomes breckand[9] on the tender bewis,[10]
Quhilk did provoke myne hart tyl[11] natural joye.
Neptune, that day, and Eoll[12] held thame coye,[13]
That men on far mycht heir the birdis sounde,
Quhose noyis[14] did to the sterrye hevin redounde.

[7] Glad.
[8] King.
[9] Blooms breaking.
[10] Boughs.
[11] To.
[12] Eolus.
[13] Quiet.
[14] Whose noise.

* "That lusty lampe and lanterne of the hevin,
And glader of the sterris with his lycht."
—*Dreme*, l. 421.

The plesand powne[1] prunyeand his feddrem[2] fair;
The myrthfull maves maid gret melodie;
The lustye[3] lark ascending in the air,
Numerand[4] his naturall notis craftilye;[5]
The gay goldspink;[6] the meryll[7] rycht myrralye;
The noyis of the nobyll nychtingalis;
Redoundit[8] throuch the montans, meids, and valis.[9]

1 Peacock.
2 Preening his feathers.
3 Delightsome.
4 Numbering.
5 Skilfully.
6 Goldfinch.
7 Blackbird right merrily.
8 Resounded.
9 Mountains, meads, and vales.

Contempling[10] this melodious armonye,
Quhow[11] everilke[12] bird drest thame for tyl[13] advance,
To saluss[14] Nature with thare melodye,
That I stude gasing,[15] halflingis[16] in ane trance,
To heir thame mak thare naturall observance,
So royallie, that all the roches[17] rang,
Throuch repercussioun[18] of thare suggurit sang.[19]

10 Contemplating.
11 How.
12 Every.
13 To.
14 Salute.
15 Gazing.
16 Half-way, partly.
17 Rocks.
18 Reverberation.
19 Sugared, sweet song.

I lose my tyme, allace! for to rehers
Sic unfruitful and vaine discriptioun,
Or wrytt, in to my raggit rurall vers,
Mater[20] without edificatioun;
Consydering quhow that myne intentioun

20 Matter.

[1] Be to.

Bene tyll[1] deplore the mortall misereis,
With continuall cairfull calamiteis." *

This picture is remarkable for the careful evolution and subordination of the features of the scene. Everything is in natural order, and comes in the way of gradual disclosure. There is a mixture in it of the merely agreeable sensations with the higher æsthetical feelings, but the whole is natural, taken at first hand, and complete. The reference to the notes of the birds is exceedingly happy, and beautifully turned. The dew-drops hanging on the herbs like orient pearls is very beautiful, and shows that the Scottish poet anticipated Shakespeare in the same image:—

"The liquid drops of tears that you have shed,
Shall come again, transform'd to orient pearls."

So Milton:—

"the crisped brooks
Rolling on orient pearls." †

The only drawback to the perfection of the

* *Prologue—Experience and ane Courteour*, l. 118 *et seq.* *Works*, vol. ii. p. 230.

† Note by Chalmers.

description is the introduction, to some extent after the manner of Douglas, of long, lumbering, Latinised adjectives—bad for the rhythm, and bad not less for the pictorial effect.

Lyndsay, like Douglas, has left us a description of Winter. It is by no means so powerful as that of the older poet; but it is in the same spirit of weariness and repugnance to the season, and a wailing for the departed summer. The sympathy for the creatures of the wilds—especially the birds—shows the tenderness of the true poet's heart. This Lyndsay has in common with Douglas and with Robert Burns, showing the community of genius in its natural sympathy all through the ages.

In the Prologue to 'The Dreme' occurs the picture of Winter:—

"In to the Calendis of Januarie,
Quhen fresche Phebus, be [1] movyng [2] circulair,
Frome Capricorne was enterit in Aquarie,
With blastis that the branchis maid full bair,
The snaw and sleit perturbit all the air,
And flemit [3] Flora frome every bank and bus, [4]
Throuch supporte of the austeir Eolus."

[1] By.
[2] Circular motion.
[3] Banished.
[4] Bush.

The poet rises in the winter morning, dresses

himself in cloak and hood, "doubyll schone" (double-soled shoes), and "myttans" (mittens, woollen gloves), then sallies forth towards the sea-shore :—

"I met dame Flora, in dull weid dissagysit,[1]
Quhilk[2] in to May wes dulce[3] and delectabyll;[4]
With stalwart stormis, hir sweitness wes supprisit;[5]
Hir hevynlie hewis[6] war turnit into sabyll,
Quhilkis[7] umquhile[8] war to luffaris amiabyll.
Fled from the froste, the tender flouris I saw,
Under dame Naturis mantell, lurking law.[9]

The small fowlis, in flokkis,[10] saw I flee,
To Nature makand greit lamentatioun:
Thay lychtit[11] doun besyde me, on ane tree,
Of thair complaynt I had compassioun,
And, with ane pieteous[12] exclamatioun,
Thay said, Blyssit be Somer, with his flouris;
And waryit[13] be thou, Wynter, with thy schouris.

Allace![14] Aurora, the syllie Larke can crye,[15]
Quhare hes thou left thy balmy liquour sweit,
That us rejosit,[16] we mounting in the skye?

[1] Disguised.
[2] Who.
[3] Sweet.
[4] Delightful.
[5] Suppressed.
[6] Hues.
[7] Which (plural).
[8] Lately, before.
[9] Low.
[10] Flocks.
[11] Alighted.
[12] Piteous.
[13] Cursed.
[14] Alas.
[15] Did cry.
[16] Rejoiced.

Thy sylver droppis ar turnit in to sleit.
O fair Phebus! quhare is thy hoilsum heit?[1]
Quhy tholis[2] thou thy hevinlie plesand face
With mystie vapouris to be obscurit, allace!

[1] Wholesome heat.
[2] Sufferest.

Quhar art thow, May, with June thy syster schene[3]
Weill bordourit[4] with dasyis[5] of delyte?
And gentyll Julie, with thy mantyll grene,
Enamilet[6] with rosis red and quhyte?
Now auld and cauld Januar, in dispyte,
Reiffis[7] frome us all pastyme and plesour:
Allace! quhat gentyll hart may this indure?

[3] Sheen.
[4] Bordered.
[5] Daisies.
[6] Enamelled.
[7] Reives.

Ouersylit[8] ar with cloudis odious
The goldin skyis of the Orient;
Changeyng in[9] sorrow our song melodious,
Quhilk we had wount[10] to sing, with gude intent,
Resoundand to the hevinnis firmament;
Bot now our daye is changeit in to nycht.
With that thay rais,[11] and flew furth of my sycht.

[8] Overcovered.
[9] Changing into.
[10] Wont.
[11] Rose.

Pensyve in hart, passing full soberlie,
Unto the see, fordward[12] I fure[13] anone;[14]
The see was furth,[15] the sand wes smooth and drye;

[12] Forward
[13] Fared, went.
[14] Anon.
[15] The tide was out.

Then up and doun I musit myne allone,[1]
Tyll that I spyit[2] ane lyttill cave of stone,
Heych[3] in ane craig: upwart I did approche,
But[4] tarying, and clam[5] up in the roche."[6] *

[1] Myself alone. [2] Spied. [3] High. [4] Without. [5] Climbed. [6] Rock.

Lyndsay, in his picture of Scotland in 'The Dreme,' has the following stanzas:—

"For, throw the supporte of your hie prudence,
Of Scotland I persave[7] the properteis,
And als[8] considderis, be experience,
Of this countre the gret commoditeis:
First, the haboundance[9] of fyschis in our seis,
And fructuall montanis[10] for our bestiall,
And, for our cornis, mony lusty[11] vaill;

The ryche ryveris, pleasand and profitabyll;
The lustie lochis, with fysche of sindry kyndis;
Huntyng, halking,[12] for nobyllis convenabyll;
Forestis full of da,[13] ra,[14] hartis, and hyndis;
The fresche fontanis, quhose holesum cristal strandis[15]
Refreschis so the fair fluriste[16] grene medis,[17]
So laik[18] we no thyng that to Nature nedis." †

[7] Perceive. [8] Also. [9] Abundance. [10] Fruitful mountains. [11] Delightsome. [12] Hawking. [13] Doe. [14] Roe. [15] Streams. [16] Flourished, flowered. [17] Green meads. [18] Lack.

* Laing's *Works*, vol. i. p. 3 *et seq.* † *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 31.

This almost solitary reference to mountains is curious. It is the "fructuall" mountains—the green or lower hills — and their usefulness, which the poet alone recognises. The whole description is of a low tone, reminding one of the prosaic Wyntoun. It is, however, to be kept in mind that it is introduced to enhance the natural advantages of the country, and to show how profitless these are under the bad government of the Douglases.

The following is interesting as a description of places familiar to the poet in his early youth :—

"Adew fair Snawdoun![1] with thy touris hie,
Thy Chapell Royall, park, and tabyll rounde![2]
May, June, and July walde[3] I dwell in thee,
War I one man, to heir the birdis sounde,
Quhilk doith agane thy royall roche redounde.
Adew, Lythquo![4] quhose Palyce of plesance
Mycht be one patrone[5] in Portingall or France!

1 Stirling Castle.
2 Known as Arthur's Round Table.
3 Would.
4 Linlithgow.
5 Pattern.

Fair weill, Falkland! the fortrace[6] of Fyfe,
Thy polyte[7] park, under the Lowmound Law!
Sum tyme in thee I led ane lustye[8] lyfe,

6 Fortress.
7 Polished, embellished.
8 Pleasant, delightful.

The fallow deir, to see thame raik on raw.[1]
Court men[2] to cum[3] to thee, thay stand gret awe,
Sayand,[4] thy burgh bene, of all burrowis, baill,[5]
Because, in thee, thay never gat gude aill."[6] *

[1] Walk in row.
[2] Courtiers.
[3] Come.
[4] Saying.
[5] Wretched.
[6] Got good ale.

There is here a fine fusion of gentle and pure susceptibility to the outward sights of nature, with a sense of the power of locality and historical association. There is a forecast in it of the manner of Scott, in his dealing with storied places and names. The sharp humorous turn, in the close of the reference to Falkland, is very characteristic of the author.

* *The Papyngo*, l. 633 *et seq.* *Works*, vol. i. p. 84.

CHAPTER XI.

NATIONAL POETS OF THE STUART PERIOD: ALEXANDER MONTGOMERIE—ALEXANDER SCOTT—ALEXANDER HUME—JAMES VI.

(1535–1603.)

Sir David Lyndsay may be regarded as the last of the truly great national poets who wrote in a diction distinctively Scottish. The Wyckliffe version of the Bible had been introduced into Scotland in his time, and its circulation authorised. Then there came the Elizabethan epoch in English literature; then the union of the Crowns, and the ordinary English translation of the Bible. These influences arrested the further development of the Scottish language, and eventually led writers in Scotland to adopt the language of the southern branch of the Teutonic. It ought to be noted, as Mr Ellis has pointed

out, that the interval between Henry V. and Henry VIII., nearly a century, "while uncommonly rich in Scottish poets of distinguished excellence, does not furnish us with a single name among the writers of England deserving of much notice."* These hundred years form, moreover, the most productive era in the whole history of Scottish poetry. No other century in our history can show in its course a series of names equal to those from James I. to Sir David Lyndsay.

Alexander Montgomerie (1535-1605) was, it is supposed, born at Hazelhead Castle, in Ayrshire. Very little is known of his life. He seems to have frequented the Court, and was in receipt of a pension charged on the funds of the Archbishopric of Glasgow. His poetry is still distinctively national in spirit and subject. His language, while essentially Scottish, yet shows signs of a southern influence. He recalls Dunbar, and at the same time has certain suggestions of a more modern style of art. The two poems by which he is and will ever be best remembered are, 'Hey now the day dawis' and 'The Cherrie and the Slae.'

* *Specimens of the Early English Poets*, i. 316.

Whether 'The Cherrie and the Slae' be regarded as symbolising love or manly resolution, or both, it is a poem of high merit; and it is interesting here as showing a direct dealing with the aspects of free nature in the scenery of Scotland. Through it all there is a heart communion with "boon nature, free and wild." The poet has quite overleapt the garden garth within which his predecessors mainly confined themselves, and is out on the banks and braes and by the music of the burns. Thus the poem opens:—

"About ane bank with balmy bewis,[1]
Where nightingales their notes renewis,
With gallant goldspinks[2] gay;
The mavis, merle, and progne[3] proud,
The lintwhyt,[4] lark, and lavrock loud,
Saluted mirthful May.
When Philomel had sweetly sung,
To Progne she deplored
How Tereus cut out her tongue,
And falsely her deflowered;
Whilk story so sorie
To show herself she seemed,
To hear her so near her,
I doubted if I dreamed.

[1] Boughs.
[2] Goldfinches.
[3] Swallow.
[4] Linnet.

The cushat crouds, the corbie[1] cries,
The cuckoo cuks, the prattlyng pyes
To geck[2] her they begin;
The jargon of the jangling jays,
The craiking craws,[3] and keckling kays,[4]
They deaved[5] me with their din.
The painted pown[6] with argus eyes
Can on his mayock[7] call;
The turtle wails on withered trees,
And Echo answers all,
Repeating with greeting
How fair Narcissus fell
By lying and spying
His shadow in the well.

[1] Carrion-crow, raven.
[2] Mock.
[3] Croaking crows.
[4] Jackdaws.
[5] Deafened.
[6] Peacock.
[7] Mate.

I saw the hurcheon[8] and the hare
In hidlings[9] hirpling[10] here and there,
To make their morning mange;[11]
The con,[12] the cuning,[13] and the cat,
Whais dainty downs with dew were wat,
With stiff mustachis strange;
The hart, the hind, the dae, the rae,
The fulmart[14] and false fox;
The bearded buck clamb up the brae,
With birssy[15] bears and brocks;[16]

[8] Hedgehog.
[9] In secret places.
[10] Going as if lame.
[11] Meal.
[12] Squirrel.
[13] Rabbit.
[14] Pole-cat.
[15] Bristly.
[16] Badgers.

Some feeding, some dreading
The hunter's subtle snares,
With skipping and tripping,
They played them, all in pairs.

The air was sober, soft, and sweet,
Nae misty vapours, wind, nor weet,
But quiet, calm, and clear,
To foster Flora's fragrant flowers,
Whereon Apollo's paramours
Had trinkled many a tear;
The whilk like silver shakers[1] shined,
Embroidering beauty's bed,
Wherewith their heavy heads declined,
In Mayis colours cled,[2]
Some knopping,[3] some dropping
Of balmy liquors sweet,
Excelling and smelling,
Through Phœbus' halesome[4] heat.

[1] Silver shaking-grass.

[2] Clad.

[3] Putting forth buds.

[4] Wholesome.

Methought an heavenly heartsome thing,
When dew like diamonds did hing,
Oure-twinkling all the trees,
To study on the flurist twists,[5]
Admiring Nature's alchymists,
Laborious busy bees,

[5] Flowered twigs.

Whereof some sweetest honey sought,
To stay their lives frae sterve,[1]
And some the waxy vessels wrought,
Their purchase[2] to preserve;
So heaping, for keeping,
It in their hives they hide,
Precisely and wisely,
For winter they provide.

[1] Starvation.

[2] Gain, acquisition.

To pen the pleasures of that park,
How every blossom, branch, and bark
Against the sun did shine,
I leave to poets to compile
In stately verse, and lofty style;
It passes my ingine.[3]
But as I musèd mine alone,
I saw ane river rin
Out oure ane craggy rock of stane,
Syne lighted in ane lin,[6]
With tumbling and rumbling
Among the rockis round,
Dewalling[5] and falling
Into that pit profound.

[3] Capacity.

[4] Linn, pool.

[5] Descending slantingly.

To hear thae startling streamis clear,
Methought it music to the ear,

Where discant did abound;
With treble sweet and tenor just,
And aye the echo repercust[1]
Her diapason sound,
Set with the Ci-sol-fa-uth cleif,
Thereby to know the note;
There sounds a mighty semibreif
Out of the Elphis[2] throat;
Discretely, mair sweetly
Nor[3] crafty Amphion,
Or Muses that uses
At fountain Helicon.

[1] Reverberated.

[2] Perhaps Elf's.

[3] Than.

Wha would have tried to hear that tune,
Whilk birds corroborate aye abune,[4]
Through shouting of the larks;
Some flies sae high into the skies,
Till Cupid wakens with the cries
Of Nature's chapel clarks;*
Wha, leaving all the heavens above,
Alighted in the eird:[5]
Lo! how that little God of Love
Before me there appeared,
So mild-like, and child-like,
With bow three quarters scant;

[4] Above.

[5] Earth.

* The birds—a very common phrase.

So moylie[1] and coylie[2]
He lookèd like ane sant."[3]

[1] Mildly.
[2] Coyly.
[3] Saint.

The poet is induced to borrow from Cupid his wings and accoutrements; he then soars and falls. Whereupon—

"With sober pace I did approach
Hard to the river and the roche,[4]
Whereof I spake before;
Whose running sic[5] a murmur made,
That to the sea it softly slade:[6]
The craig was high and schore.[7]
Then pleasure did me so provoke
Perforce there to repair,
Betwixt the river and the rock,
Where hope grew with despair;
A tree then I sie then,
Of CHERRIES in the braes;
Belaw too I saw too
Ane buss[8] of bitter SLAES.[9]

The CHERRIES hung abune my head,
Like twinkling rubies round and red,
So high up in the heuch:[10]
Whose shadows in the river shew,

[4] Rock.
[5] Such.
[6] Slid, glided.
[7] Threatening, steep.
[8] A bush.
[9] Sloes.
[10] Scaur, generally by a river-side.

Als graithly[1] glancing, as they grew
On trembling twistis teuch.[2]
Whilk bowed through burding[3] of their birth,[4]
Inclining down their tops;
Reflex of Phœbus of the firth[5]
New coloured all their knops,[6]
With dancing and glancing
In tirles dornik champ,[7]
Aye streamand and gleamand
Through brightness of that lamp.

[1] Also finely.
[2] Tough twigs.
[3] Burden.
[4] Weight, bulk.
[5] Perhaps for firmament, field of heaven.
[6] Buds.
[7] Perhaps in variegated lattice-work.

With earnest eye while I espy
The fruit betwixt me and the sky,
Half gate almaist[8] to heaven;
The craig sae cumbersome to clim,
The tree sae high of growth, and trim
As any arrow even;
I called to mind how Daphne did
Within the laurel shrink,
When from Apollo she her hid
A thousand times, I think;
That tree then to me then,
As he his laurel thought,
Aspiring, but tiring,
To get that fruit I sought."*

[8] Half-way almost.

* The quotations from *The Cherrie and the Slae* of Mont-

The first seven stanzas of this poem form as noble an outburst of poetic genius as we have in the whole history of Scottish poetry. The picture of the river—evidently a burn—as it falls "oure ane craggy rock of stane," and then lighting in the linn, is as vivid to the eye as its music is clear and soothing to the ear. Gawin Douglas pictured our larger streams with a faithful touch; but it was left to Montgomerie to note for the first time, and to endow with a real presence to the imagination, the rocky rush and the linn-pool of the Scottish burn.

Gawin Douglas mentions a song popular in his time, and of considerable antiquity, by the title of 'The joly day now dawis'—

gomerie are given mainly from the version in *The Evergreen.* They differ considerably from the text as printed by Waldegrave, Edinburgh, 1597, second edition—"prented accordíng to a copie corrected be the author himselfe." The two editions published by Waldegrave, both in 1597, are incomplete. Ramsay's version professes to be taken from an edition published by Andro Hart in 1615, "newly altered, perfyted, and divided into 114 quatorzeims not long before the Author's death." No copy of Hart's edition is now known to exist.—See *The Poems of Alexander Montgomerie,* by James Cranstoun, LL.D., Part I., Prefatory Note—Scottish Text Society, 1886. Dr Cranstoun gives the text of 1597.

"Thareto thir birdis singis in thare schawis,
As menstralis playis, *The joly day now dawis.*"*

This was written in 1512.

The tune is very old, and is the same as that to which now is sung 'Scots wha hae'; it is indeed said to have been the battle-air of Bruce at Bannockburn. It was probably the common air with which the town pipers roused the burghers in the Scottish towns. Dunbar, before Douglas, says in his poem to 'The Merchants of Edinburgh'—

"Your commone menstralis hes no tune,
But '*Now the day dawis,*' and '*Into Joun.*'"

The old words are said to be lost, but the following stanzas of what appears to be the original song are found in the Fairfax MS. of date 1500:—

"This day, day dawes,
This gentil day dawes,
And I must home gone.
In a glorious garden grene
Saw I sittand a comely quene;

* *Prologue*, xiii.

Among the flowers that fresh byn
She gathered and set betwene.
The lilye-white methought I saw,
And ever she sang
This day, day dawes,
This gentil day dawes."

Alexander Montgomerie has written a new set of verses to the old tune, which is one of the finest things of his muse. The feeling and spirit of the early morning are most truthfully and graphically given, fused with the life and pursuits of the people:—

"Hey, now the day dawis,[1]
The jolie cok crawis,[2]
Now shrouds[3] the shawis[4]
Throu Nature anone.[5]
The thrissell-cok[6] cryis
On lovers wha lyis,
Now skaillis[7] the skyis;
The night is neir gone.

The feildis ourflowis
With gowans that growis,
Quhair lilies lyk low[8] is
Als rid[9] as the rone:[10]

1 Dawns.
2 Crows.
3 Array.
4 Woods.
5 Anon.
6 Throstle, thrush.
7 Open up or out.
8 Flame.
9 As red.
10 Rowan.

The Turtill that treu is,
With nots that renewis,
Hir pairtie[1] persewis,[2]
  The night is neir gone.

[1] Mate.
[2] Pursues.

Now Hairtis with Hynds
Conforme to their kynds;
Hie tursis thair tynds,[3]
  On grund quhair thay grone.
Now Hurchonis with Hairs
Ay passis in pairs;
Quhilk dewly declairs
  The night is neir gone.

[3] High toss their horns.

The sesone[4] excellis
Thrugh sweetness that smellis,
Now Cupid compellis
  Our hairts echone.[5]
On Venus wha waiks[6]
To muse on our maiks,[7]
Syn[8] sing, for thair saiks,[9]
  The night is neir gone.

[4] Season.
[5] Each one.
[6] Watches, waits.
[7] Mates.
[8] Then.
[9] Sakes.

All curageous knichtis
Aganis the day dichtis,[10]
The breist-plate that bricht is,
  To feght[11] with thair fone.[12]

[10] Prepare.
[11] Fight.
[12] Foes.

The stonèd steed stampis
Throw curage and crampis,
Syn on the land lampis;[1]
The night is neir gone.

The freikis[2] on feildis,
That wight wapnis[3] weildis,
With shyning bricht sheildis,
As Titan in trone.[4]
Stiff speirs in reists[5]
Over cursoris[6] creists,
Ar brok[7] on thair briestis;
The night is neir gone.

So hard ar thair hittis,[8]
Some sweys,[9] some sittis,
And some perforce flittis[10]
On grund quhill they grone.[11]
Syn grooms[12] that gay is,
On blonks[13] that brayis,
With swords assayis;
The night is neir gone."

[1] Beats.
[2] Fellows, men.
[3] Strong weapons.
[4] Throne.
[5] Rest, support of weapon.
[6] War-horse, tilting horse.
[7] Are broken.
[8] Strokes.
[9] Sway.
[10] Flit, fall to the ground.
[11] Groan.
[12] Men.
[13] Horses.

Alexander Scott, of whose life very little is known, is remembered for his sprightly love-songs. He was in the vigour of his powers in 1562,

when he wrote 'Ane New Year's Gift to the Queen Mary.' He has left one descriptive poem of great merit, entitled, 'O Lustie May':—

"O lustie[1] May, with Flora Queen,
The balmy drops from Phebus sheen;
Prelucent beam before the day;
By thee Diana groweth green,
Through gladness of this lusty May;
Then Aurora that is so bright
To woful hearts she casts great light,
Right pleasantly before the day,
And shows and sheds forth of that light
Through gladness of this lusty May.
Birds on the boughs, of every sort,
Send forth their notes and make great mirth
On banks that bloom, and every brae;
And fare[2] and flee ower every firth,[3]
Through gladness of this lusty May.
And lovers all that are in care,
To their ladies they do repair,
In fresh morning before the day;
And are in mirth, aye mair and mair,
Through gladness of this lusty May.
Of every moneth in the year

[1] Delightsome.
[2] Pass.
[3] Field.

To mirthful May there is no peer,
Her glistering garments are so gay;
You lovers all make merry cheer
Through gladness of this lusty May." *

This is a smooth and beautifully turned lyric, and it is instinct with the modern feeling for natural beauty.

The following poem—a true lyric—is given from the Bannatyne MS., compiled in 1568, the year of the battle of Langside. It is one of the first examples in which there is the courage to depend mainly for poetical effect on the simple appeal to the power of the outward world, truthfully described. The picture is artistically imperfect. It is a catalogue of features rather than a masterly unity. But it is true, native, heartfelt, and to be prized. I hardly think, looking to the feeling and the language, that it could have been written earlier than the time of Mary. Indeed it seems very like the production of Alexander Scott.

* See Laing's *Collected Edition of Scott's Poems.* Edin., 1821.

Welcum to May.

(*From the Bannatyne MS.*)

" Be gled, al ye that luvaris bene,[1]
For now hes May depaynt with grene
The hillis, valis, and the medis;
And flouris lustely[2] upspreidis,
Awalk[3] out of your sluggairdy,[4]
To heir the birdis melody;
Quhois suggourit[5] nottis loud and cleir
Is now ane parradice to heir.
Go walk upoun sum rever[6] fair;
Go tak the fresh and holsum[7] air;
Go luke upoun the flurist fell;[8]
Go feill the herbis plesand smell;
Quhilk will your comfort gar incres,[9]
And all avoid your haviness[10]—
The new cled purpour hevin espy,
Behold the lark now in the sky,
With besy wyng scho clymis[11] on hicht,
For grit[12] joy of the dayis licht,
Behold the verdour fresche of hew,
Powdderit with grene, quhyt,[13] and blew,
Quhairwith dame Flora, in this May,
Dois richely all the feild array;

[1] Be.
[2] Pleasantly, pleasurably.
[3] Awake.
[4] Sluggishness.
[5] Sugared.
[6] River.
[7] Wholesome.
[8] Flowered field.
[9] Cause to increase.
[10] Heaviness.
[11] Climbs.
[12] Great.
[13] White.

And how Aurora, with visage pale,
Inbalmes with his cristal hale,[1]
The grene and tendir pylis ying,[2]
Of every gress[3] that does upspryng;
And with hir beriall[4] droppis bricht,
Makis the gresys[5] gleme of licht.
Luk[6] on the ausir[7] firmament,
And on the anammellit[8] orient;
Luke or[9] Phebus put up his heid,
As he dois raiss his baneris reid,
He dois the eist so bricht attyre,
That all semis birnyng[10] in a fyre;
Quhilk comfort dois to every thing,
Man, bird, beist, and flurissing.[11]
Quhairfoir luvaris be glaid and lycht,
For short [it] is your havy[12] nycht,
And lenthit[13] is your myrry day,
Thairfoir ye welcum now this May:
And birdis do your hail plesance
With mirry song and observance,[14]
This May to welcum at your mycht,
At fresch Phebus uprysing bricht:
And all the flouris that dois spreid,
Lay furth your levis upoun breid,[15]
And welcum May with benyng cheir,[16]
The quene of every moneth cleir,

[1] Hail, for dewdrop.
[2] Young shoots, blades.
[3] Grass.
[4] Shining like the beryl.
[5] Grasses.
[6] Look.
[7] Azure.
[8] Enamelled.
[9] Before.
[10] Burning.
[11] Blossom, flowering.
[12] Heavy.
[13] Lengthened.
[14] Respect, duty.
[15] Open broadly your leaves.
[16] Benign cheer.

And every man thank in his mynd
The God of Natur and of Kynd,[1] [1] Mankind.
Quhilk ordanit all for our behufe,
The erd undir, the air abufe,
Bird, beist, flour, tyme, day, and nycht,
The planeitis haill[2] to give us licht." * [2] All.

The overspreading green—the notes of the birds—the river fair—the fresh and wholesome air—the bushes' pleasant smell—the increase of comfort and the avoiding of heaviness — the green, white, and blue of the fields—the crystal dewdrops of the morning on the green and tender piles of grass—the gleam of light on the higher grasses,—are fine and well fused. Then there is the grand picture of the east before the sun is fully up—when he raises his banners red, and attires the sky in a burning fire. This is mixed with the material consideration of its bringing comfort to everything—man, bird, beast, and bloom. We have here a good illustration of the rising from mere agreeable sensation—the comfort of living—to the æsthetical, the unselfish feeling of the beautiful in the world around us. The call to the spreading flowers to open their

* Laing's *Ancient Popular Poetry*, No. 11.

leaves broadly to the sun, and welcome May with benign cheer, shows a deep sympathy with the community of life between nature and the spirit at work in the living, throbbing universe with which the poet holds intercourse.

Alexander Hume (1560-1609) was the second son of Patrick Hume, the Laird or Baron of Polwarth. He was educated at St Andrews, and afterwards studied law in France. Returning to Scotland, he found both the study and practice of law repulsive. He then tried Court life, which proved as little to his liking; and finally sought the Church, as more congenial to his sensitive and meditative temperament. He was admitted minister of Logie, in Clackmannanshire, in 1598.

Hume may fairly be said to be the first of our Scottish poets who had the courage to choose for a poetic subject exclusively a purely descriptive scene, and that a Scottish one—a summer day in Scotland; and notwithstanding certain defects in the treatment, such as the introduction of some foreign features, and a tendency to catalogue rather than to compose, the picture is one of great interest and beauty.

The Day Estivall.

"O perfite light! whilk sched[1] away
The darkness from the light,
And set a ruler oure the day,
Ane other oure the night.

Thy glory, when the day forth flies,
More vively[2] does appear
Nor[3] at mid-day unto our eyes
The shining sun is clear.

The shadow of the earth anon,
Removes and drawis by;
Sine[4] in the east when it is gone,
Appears a clearer sky.

Whilk[5] soon perceives the little larks,
The lapwing and the snype,
And tunes thair sangs like nature's clarks,
Oure meadow, muir, and strype.

But every bauld nocturnall beast
Nae langer may abide;
They hie away, baith maist and least,[6]
Themselves in house to hide.

[1] Divided.

[2] Vividly, lively.

[3] Than.

[4] Then.

[5] Which.

[6] Largest and smallest.

They dread the day, frae they it see,[1]
And from the sight of men;
To seats and covers fast they flee,
As lions to their den.

Our hemisphere is poleist clean,
And lightened more and more,
Till every thing be clearly seen
Whilk seemèd dim before.

Except the glistering astres[2] bright,
Whilk all the night were clear,
Offuskèd[3] with a greater light,
Nae langer does appear.

The golden globe incontinent
Sets up his shining head,
And oure the earth and firmament
Displays his beams abread.[4]

For joy the birds, with boulden[5] throats,
Agains[6] his visage sheen,
Takes up their kindly music notes
In woods and gardens green.

Upbraids[7] the careful husbandman,
His corns and vines to see,

[1] As soon as they see it.
[2] Stars.
[3] Over-shadowed.
[4] Abroad.
[5] Swelling.
[6] Against.
[7] Uprises, upgoes.

And every timeous[1] artisan
In booth works busily.

The pastor quits the slothful sleep,
And passes forth with speed,
His little camow-nosèd[2] sheep
And rowting[3] kye to feed.

The passenger from perils sure
Gangs[4] gladly forth the way:
Brief, every living creature
Takes comfort of the day.

The subtle motty[5] rayons light,
At rifts[6] they are in won;[7] *
The glancing thains[8] and vitre[9] bright,
Resplends agains[10] the sun.

The dew upon the tender crops,
Like pearlis white and round,
Or like to melted silver drops,
Refreshes all the pound.[11]

The misty reek,[12] the clouds of rain,
From tops of mountains skaills;[13]
Clear are the highest hills and plain,
The vapours takes the vales.

[1] Punctual to time, early.
[2] Flat-nosed.
[3] Lowing.
[4] Goes.
[5] Full of motes.
[6] Chinks.
[7] Gained entrance.
[8] Perhaps gossamer.
[9] Glass.
[10] Against.
[11] Meadow.
[12] Smoke, here same as *rouk*, mist.
[13] Disperse.

* So later, Ramsay:—

"The rising sun shines motty thro' the reek."

Begaried[1] is the sapphire pend,[2]
With spraings[3] of skarlet hue,
And preciously from end to end
Damaskèd white and blue.

The ample heaven of fabric sure
In cleanness doth surpass
The crystal and the silver pure,
As clearest poleist glass.

The time sae tranquil is and still,
That nae where shall ye find,
Save on ane high and barren hill,
The air of peeping[4] wind.

All trees and simples,[5] great and small,
That balmy leaf do bear,
Nor[6] they were painted on a wall,
Nae mair they move or steir.[7]

Calm is the deep and purpour sea,
Yea, smoother than the sand;
The wallis[8] that weltering wont to be,
Are stable like the land.

Sae silent is the cessile[9] air,
That every cry and call,
The hills and dales and forest fair
Again repeats them all.

[1] Variegated.
[2] Arch.
[3] Streaks.
[4] Softly sighing.
[5] Bushes.
[6] Than.
[7] Stir.
[8] Waves.
[9] Yielding.

The rivers fresh, the caller streams
Oure rocks can [1] softly rin;
The water clear like crystal seems,
And makes a pleasant din.

The fields and earthly superfice [2]
With verdure green is spread,
And naturally, but [3] artifice,
In party [4] colours cled.

The flourishes [5] and fragrant flowers,
Through Phœbus' fostering heat,
Refreshed with dew and silver showers,
Casts up an odour sweet.

The cloggèd [6] busy humming-bees,
That never thinks to drown,[7]
On flowers and flourishes of trees
Collects their liquor brown.

The sun, maist like a speedy post,
With ardent course ascends,
The beauty of the heavenly host,
Up to our zenith tends.

Not guided by a Phaeton,
Nor trainèd [8] in a chayre,[9]
But by the high and holy One,
Whilk [10] does all where empire.[11]

[1] Do, usually did.
[2] Surface.
[3] Without.
[4] Varied.
[5] Blossoms.
[6] Clagged with honey.
[7] Drone, idle.
[8] Drawn.
[9] Car.
[10] Who.
[11] Rule, hold empire.

The burning beams down from his face
Sae fervently can beat,
That man and beast now seeks a place
To save them frae the heat.

The breathless flocks draws to the shade
And freshure of their fold;
The startling nolt[1] as they were mad,
Runs to the rivers cold.

The herds beneath some leafy trees
Amids the flowers they lie;
The stable ships upon the seas
Tends[2] up their sails to dry.

The hart, the hind, the fallow deer
Are tapisht[3] at their rest;
The fowls and birds that made the beir,[4]
Prepares their pretty nest.

The rayons dures[5] descending down,
All kindles in a gleid,[6]
In city nor in borroughs-town
May nane set forthe their head.

Back from the blue paymented whun,[7]
And from ilk plaister wall,
The hot reflexing of the sun
Inflames the air and all.

[1] Oxen.
[2] Stretch, extend.
[3] Lurking, couching.
[4] Sound, music.
[5] Strong, keen.
[6] Hot glare or blaze.
[7] Pavement of whinstone or greywacke.

The labourers that timely raise,
All weary, faint, and weak
For heat, down to their houses gaes,[1]
Noon-meat and sleep to take.

[1] Go.

The caller wine in cave is sought,
Men's brotheing[2] beasts to cool;
The water cold and clear is brought,
And sallad steeped in ule.[3]

[2] Perspiring profusely, frothing.

[3] Oil, *ulzie*—Fr. *huile.*

Some plucks the honey plowm[4] and pear,
The cherry and the peach;
Some likes the rime,[5] and London beer,
The body to refresh.

[4] Plum.

[5] Perhaps foam.

Forth of their skepps[6] some raging bees
Lyes out, and will not cast;
Some other swarmes hives on the trees
In knots together fast.

[6] Hives.

The corbies and the kekling kaes[7]
May scarce the heat abide;
Hawks prunyeis[8] on the sunny braes,
And wedders back and side.[9]

[7] Jackdaws.

[8] Preen themselves.

[9] Move backwards and sideways.

With gilted eyes and open wings
The cock his courage shows;
With claps of joy his breast he dings,[10]
And twenty times he crows.

[10] Strikes, flaps.

The doo,[1] with whistling wing sae blue,
The winds can fast collect;
Her purpour penns[2] turns merry hue,
Agains[3] the sun direct.

Now noon is went,[4] gone is mid-day,
The heat does slack at last;
The sun descends down west away
Frae three o'clock be past.

A little cool of breathing wind
Now softly can arise;
The works through heat that lay behind,
Now men may enterprise.

Forth fares the flocks to seek their food
On every hill and plain;
Whilk[5] labourer, as he thinks good,
Steps to his turn again.

The rayons of the sun we see
Diminish in their strenth;[6]
The shade of every tower and tree
Extended is in lenth.[7]

Great is the calm, for everywhere
The wind is setting down;
The reik[8] thrawes[9] right up in the air
From every tower and town.

[1] Dove.
[2] Feathers.
[3] Against.
[4] Wended, past.
[5] Which, whoever.
[6] Strength.
[7] Length.
[8] Smoke.
[9] Wreathes.

Their firdoning[1] the bony birds
In bauks[2] they do begin;
With pipes of reeds the jolly herds
Halds[3] up the merry din.

The mavies and the philomeen,
The starling whistles loud;
The cushets on the branches green
Full quietly they crowd.[4]

The gloaming comes, the day is spent,
The sun goes out of sight,
And painted is the occident
With purpour sanguine bright.

The scarlet nor the golden thread,
Who would their beauty try,
Are naething like the colour red
And beauty of the sky.

Our west horizon circular,
Frae time the sun be set,
Is all with rubies, as it were,
Or roses red ourefrett.[5]

What pleasure were to walk and see,
Endlang[6] a river clear,
The perfect form of every tree
Within the deep appear!

[1] Singing.

[2] Banks of earth between fields, or dividing strips of land left unploughed.

[3] Hold.

[4] Crood, coo.

[5] Overfretted.

[6] Alongside.

The salmon out of cruives[1] and creills,[2]
Uphailèd[3] into skoutts;[4]
The bells and circles on the weills,[5]
Through lowping[6] of the trouts.

O! then it were a seemly thing,
While all is still and calm,
The praise of God to play and sing
With cornet and with schalme.[7]

But now the herds, with mony shout,
Calls other by their name.
Gae, Billie! turn our gude[8] about,
Now time is to gae hame.

With belly fou,[9] the beasts belyve[10]
Are turnèd frae the corn,
Whilk[11] soberly they hameward drive,
With pipe and lilting horn.

Through all the land great is the gild[12]
Of rustic folks that cry;
Of bleeting sheep, frae they be filled,
Of calves and routing kye.

All labourers draws hame at even,
And can till other say,
Thanks to the gracious God of Heaven,
Whilk sent this summer day."

[1] Box or crib placed in a river for trapping salmon.
[2] Baskets.
[3] Drawn up.
[4] Cobles, small boats.
[5] Eddying pools.
[6] Leaping.
[7] Pipe, fluted instrument.
[8] Stock, herd.
[9] Full.
[10] Forthwith.
[11] Which.
[12] Clamour, noise.

The interest of this poem is its intense realism—its true satisfied feeling for the sights and sounds of the world around—for the successive scenes of sky and earth, country, sea, and town, as they stand out in the light and are affected by the rise, the noon-tide, the afternoon, and the evening of a summer day. The simple manners of the time are also touchingly portrayed. The meditative minister of Logie had a true eye for nature, and a susceptibility of heart which enabled him to feel its gentler charms.

In the series of pictures which pass before the eye, we may note for power and beauty that of the tranquillity of the time. This is touched, deepened by "the air of peeping wind," to be felt only on the top of the "high and barren hill;" it is impressed on the eye by the trees, motionless as if "painted on a wall;" and it is brought home to the ear by cry and call repeated from "hill and dale and forest fair," and by "the rivers fresh" and "the water clear," making "a pleasant din."

When, speaking of the trees, he says—

"Nor they were painted on a wall,
Nae mair they move or steir;"

—we have an anticipation of Coleridge in his lines—

> "As idle as a painted ship
> Upon a painted ocean."

In the afternoon there is a peculiarly true and characteristic picture of the land as a man then living would see it—when "tower and town"—that is, square peel, castle, and farmsteading, set amid their clumps of trees—would be the prominent objects of vision. The rays of the sun are losing their strength, and the shadows are lengthening:—

> "The shade of every tower and tree
> Extended is in lenth."

And then—

> "The reik thrawes right up in the air
> From every tower and town."

Besides the series of descriptions, there are epithets in themselves pictures. The "sure fabric" of the "ample heaven" and its "cleanness" have a moral suggestion about them recalling later utterances on the same theme. The hot glare of the sun's rays in the streets of

the borough town implied in the phrase "kindles in a gleid" is a true and graphic touch—and not less the mingled outbreak of sound in the gloaming from "rustic folks" and "bleeting sheep" and "routing kye."

With Montgomerie and his contemporaries, Scott and Hume, we bid adieu for a long period to any apparent sympathy with the Scottish landscape. After these men, we have almost no references to outward scenery in the way of description for several generations of poets, and those we have are generally merely imitations. There was, indeed, no true return to nature among the acknowledged poets until the time of Drummond of Hawthornden, to be followed by Allan Ramsay. For the most part, it is wholly passed by; and we find the Scottish muse employed on what are known as sacred themes — seeking to make popular, or throw into recognised popular forms, theological and spiritual conceptions and experience — often with a passionate conviction and enthusiasm which command respect, while it is quaint in its form and eminently national. The very intensity which pervades this kind

of composition is perhaps essentially connected with its narrowness, even in the religious sphere, and with its exclusion of what is high, elevating, and refining, alike in the walks of reflection and imagination. It was probably a necessity of the age and time; it arose partly in the way of reaction from the insincerity, hypocrisy, and unworthiness of life characteristic of the immediately preceding age; but that it involved a serious loss to the integrity of our human life — to its breadth, its culture, its true vitality and place in the real world of experience—cannot, I think, be doubted. We cannot without harm turn a deaf ear to any side of that world through which God is revealed to us. To sever the twinship of Nature and Revelation, or to break with art for the sake of worship, is a mistake hurtful to the interests of both.

The other names of poets and versifiers in this century a little before or partly contemporary with Montgomerie may be briefly mentioned, though their writings afford nothing worthy of note in connection with the present line of investigation.

Sir James Inglis, Abbot of Culross, was originally connected with the Court of James V., and is referred to by Sir David Lyndsay. He was assassinated on the 1st March 1531 by Blakader, Baron of Tulliallan. His remains yield no gleanings for the present purpose. Inglis has been regarded by some as the author of 'The Complaynt of Scotland,' printed in 1548, and published in 1549. But this is unlikely, looking to the date of his death. There seems, however, to have been another person of the same name, who was alive in 1532, and who may have been the author. 'The Complaynt' has been ascribed also to Robert Wedderburn, one of the authors of 'The Gude and Godly Ballates.'

James V. (1512-1542) had in him the taste and poetic soul of the Stuart kings. That he was a man of poetic faculty is unquestionable, from the testimonies of Lyndsay and Bellenden. We have, unfortunately, no poem which we can with perfect certainty attribute to him. 'The Gaberlunzie Man' and 'The Jolly Beggar' are with some probability regarded as his productions. That he was a man of keen sensibility is shown by the manner of his death. The

dishonour of Solway Moss—the blame of which he felt was his own—proved too much for his high spirit.

John Bellenden—said to have died in 1550, about sixty years of age—was at first attached to the Court of James V. in the interest of the Douglases. He is well known as the translator into the vernacular of the Latin History of Scotland, by Hector Boyce, Principal of King's College, Aberdeen.

Bellenden afterwards became Archdeacon of Moray, and he is mentioned with warm encomium by Sir David Lyndsay. His poetical writings are few and slight, and in his references to outward nature he is merely imitative of his predecessors. Thus—

"Quhen goldin Phebus movit fra the Ram,
Into the Bull to make his mansioun,
And hornit Diane in the Virgine cam,
With visage paill in hir ascensioun,
Approchand till hir opposicioun:
Quhen donk Aurora with hir misty schouris,
Fleand of skyis the bricht reflexioun,
Hir silver hewis skalit on the flouris." *

* Quoted in Irving's *History of Scottish Poetry*, p. 316.

Robert Pont, Robert and John Wedderburn, Alexander Cunningham Earl of Glencairn, Henry Balnaves of Hallhill, John Davidson, Regent in St Leonard's College, St Andrews, may be regarded as Reformation poets or versifiers of the middle and latter part of the sixteenth century. They yield no gleanings in the present field.

To Sir Richard Maitland of Lethington (1496-1586) we are indebted for the preservation of much of our ancient poetry, in the two manuscript volumes deposited in the library of Magdalen College, Oxford. His own verses relate chiefly to theological and political topics—the morals of the clergy, the oppression of the landlords who had got hold of the Church lands, the law's delay, and the raids of the Border thieves.*

To George Bannatyne we owe the most valuable collection of our older Scottish poetry. The manuscript is of date 1568. His own poems have nothing bearing on the topic of the present volume.†

* See Pinkerton's *Ancient Scottish Poems.* London, 1786.

† See *Ancient Scottish Poems*, published from the MS. of George Bannatyne, 1568. Edin., 1770. [Lord Hailes.]

Sir Patrick Hume of Polwart (Polwarth), elder brother of Alexander Hume, is the author of 'The Promine, contening the maner, place, and time of the maist Illuster King James the Sext, his first passing to the feildis.'* It contains a good deal of description of nature; but the language is Latinised with painful elaboration.

Neither Alexander Arbuthnot (born in 1538) nor Robert Semple (died in 1595) affords us anything worthy of note.

Among other poets in the time of James VI. was Stewart of Baldynneis, known as a translator of Ariosto. In some lines 'To his awin Maistres,' he follows the conventional order in describing the morning and the garden; but the picture contains no new feature.†

George Buchanan (1506-1582), though Scottish in sympathy and in his choice of literary subjects, was not distinctively a poet of the national scenery. He was moulded almost wholly by classical writers, and wrote in Latin

* Imprentit at Edinburgh be Johne Ros, for Henrie Charteris: 1580.

† See Irving's *History*, p. 467.

prose and verse. 'The Calends of May' of Buchanan is a well-known poem, and, as founded on the classical model, has merit and interest. But it contains no feature distinctively Scottish. It has been well translated by Robert Hogg, a nephew of the Ettrick Shepherd, and also by Thomas Smibert in his volume 'Io Anche.'

The following lines are from Hogg's translation:—

"All hail to thee, thou first of May,
Sacred to wonted sport and play,
To wine, and jest, and dance, and song,
And mirth that lasts the whole day long!
Hail! of the seasons honour bright,
Annual return of sweet delight;
Flower of reviving summer's reign,
That hastes to time's old age again!
When spring's mild air at nature's birth,
First breathed upon the new-formed earth;
Or when the fabled age of gold,
Without fixed law, spontaneous rolled;
Such zephyrs, in continual gales,
Passed temperate along the vales,
And softened and refreshed the soil,
Not broken yet by human toil.

Such fruitful warmths perpetual rest
On the fair islands of the blest—
Those plains where fell diseases' moan
And frail old age are both unknown.
Such winds with gentle whispers spread
Among the dwellings of the dead,
And shake the cypresses that grow
Where Lethe murmurs soft and slow.
Perhaps when God at last in ire
Shall purify the world with fire,
And to mankind restore again
Times happy, void of sin and pain,
The beings of this earth beneath
Such pure ethereal air shall breathe.
Hail! glory of the fleeting year!
Hail! day, the fairest, happiest here!
Memorial of the time gone by,
And emblem of futurity!" *

The poem here translated is that which is printed under the head of 'Miscellanea' in Buchanan's Poems.† There is another poem with the same title, 'Maiæ Calendæ,' given under the 'Elegiæ' in the same volume. ‡

* Given in *Cyclopædia of English Literature*, i. 174.
† P. 456. Lond. : 1686. ‡ P. 351.

Buchanan, in a vigorous passage of the 'Franciscanus,' bewails the degeneracy of the youth of the time, who love the city roar and the cook-shop, and do not dare to seek the "arduous tops of the mountains," "the wide-spreading fields," "the aerial tracts of woods," "the fountains," and "the meadows renewed in purpureal youth;" and then comes a fine outburst, worthy of the strong manhood that was in him:—

"O mihi si calido serveret corpore sanguis
Integer, et validæ vires, firmataque nervis
Membra suis, quam prata libens et florea Tempe
Aspicerem, et viridis captans umbracula sylvæ,
Et tremulæ leve murmur aquæ, cantusque volucrum,
Languida sepositis relevarem pectora curis!" *

The true heart for nature is in these lines.

Buchanan's picture of the Chaldean clime is very well and clearly lined:—

"Chaldæi proceres, sic fama est prodita, vasti
Cum campi incolerent æquor, lateque pateret
Ætheris immensi partes prospectus in omnes,
In numeros primi stellas et nomina certa

* *Franciscanus*, p. 317: ed. 1686.

Digessere, suis signantes astra figuris.
Illiciebat enim mentesque oculosque benigna
Temperies, aer tranquilla luce serenus
Semper, et æstivi facies innubila cœli." *

Compare this with the lines of Wordsworth :—

" Chaldean shepherds, ranging trackless fields,
Beneath the concave of unclouded skies
Spread like a sea, in boundless solitude,
Looked on the polar star, as on a guide
And guardian of their course, that never closed
His steadfast eye." †

Speaking of the sea which beats on the shore of Scotland, in the 'Epithalamium' on the marriage of Francis of Valois with Mary Stuart, Buchanan has the following lines :—

"Non spumis fremituque minax, sed fronte serena
Littus inoffensum lambit, sensimque relabens
Arrepit facilis cerni, et ceu mollia captet
Oscula, ludentes in littore lubricat undas." ‡

We may see in this fine image the modern

* *De Sphæra*, i. 481.
† *Excursion*, IV., vol. vi. p. 118.
‡ *Poemata, Sylvæ.* Londini: 1686. P. 381.

source, at least, of a good many unacknowledged and but slightly varied repetitions.

In the 'Sylvæ,' the 'De Sphæra,' and in the 'Franciscanus,' Buchanan has given certain descriptive scenes. But his main interest did not lie in this line, and he does not appear to have drawn much at first hand from the scenery of his native land.

James VI. (1566-1625) had strong youthful aspirations after literary fame. At the age of eighteen he published 'The Essayes of a Prentice in the divine art of Poesie' (1584). His subsequent writings, both in verse and prose, show a formidable list. In his lifetime, his writings and public exercitations were the subject of the most unblushing laudation; since his death, his literary merits have been almost as unduly depreciated. He was certainly deficient in common-sense, courage, and sound judgment; but he was a man of very considerable intellectual power—especially dialectical,—widely read, and of decidedly scholarly attainments. He lacked the breadth and robustness of mind which can save from pedantry.

In his earliest production, the King gives a

description of Spring, Summer, Harvest, and Winter in a series of sonnets. They are but of mediocre merit; yet considering they were written by a youth in his teens—with "greening great for fame above his peers,"—they were not without promise of better things. Of his after-life he mournfully said, "My burden is great and continual." Sonnet III. is devoted to Spring:—

"And first, O Phœbus, when I do descrive
The springtyme sproutar of the herbes and flowris,
Whomewith in rank none of the foure do strive,
But nearest thee do stande all tymes and howris:
Graunt Readers may esteme they sie the showris,
Whose balmie dropps so softlie dois distell,
Which watrie cloudds in mesure suche downe powris,
As makis the herbis and verie earth to smell
With savours sweit, fra tyme that onis[1] they fell.
The vapouris softlie sowkis[2] with smyling cheare,
Whilks[3] syne in cloudds are keiped close and well,
Whill[4] vehement winter come in tyme of yeare.
Graunt, when I lyke the springtyme to displaye,
That Readers think they sie the spring alwaye." *

[1] Once.
[2] Soak.
[3] Which
[4] Until.

* *Essayes.* Ed. by Gillies. Edin.: 1814.

Perhaps the following is the best specimen of the versification of James VI. It is the sonnet subjoined to his description of the battle of Lepanto:—

"The azur'd vaulte, the crystall circles bright,
The gleaming fyrie torches powdred there,
The changing round, the shyning beamie light,
The sad and bearded fyres, the monsters faire,
The prodiges appearing in the aire,
The rearding thunders and the blustering winds,
The foules in hew, in shape, in nature raire,
The prettie notes that wing'd musiciens finds;
The earth, the sav'rie floures, the metall'd minds,[1]
The wholesome hearbes, the hautie[2] pleasant trees,
The sylver streames, the beasts of sundrie kinds,
The bounded roares, and fishes of the seas:
All these for teaching man the Lord did frame,
To do His will whose glorie shines in thame."

[1] Mines.
[2] Tall.

This is an enumeration, not a description; yet it contains some happy touches and expressions.

After the death of Sir David Lyndsay in 1557, in the midst of the throes of the Reformation struggle, there was a decided tendency

to languish on the part of pure literature. No name equal to his occurs in the subsequent part of the century, or indeed in the century following. With Lyndsay closed the series of the great national Scottish poets of the Stuart epoch. Alexander Montgomerie cannot be placed in the same rank as Lyndsay, although he is certainly the equal of the latter poet in descriptive power. The intensity and enthusiasm of which the national character is capable found an absorbing outlet in theological contentions, social distractions, and unsettled political conflict—first in the Reformation period itself, then finally after the union of the Crowns in 1603, and still more in that century of narrow-minded, cruel, and disgraceful misrule, down to the Revolution of 1688, and then even to the union of the Parliaments in 1707. The barrenness in the higher fields of literature in the earlier period was due partly to the spirit of the time, which was intensely earnest and resolute, dominated by the one religious idea of the supremacy of the individual conscience and the need of personal quickening and conviction—the result of a strong reaction from priestly rule and pretensions. But the very interest of this feeling led to one-sidedness and to an aversion

to pure literature, whether reflective or imaginative. Principal Arbuthnot, one of the leaders of the Church in that age, who yet cherished literary longings, writes :—

" In poetrie I preis[1] to pas the tyme,
When cairfull thochts with sorow sailyes[2] me ;
But gif I mell[3] with meter or with ryme,
With rascal rymours I sall reknit[4] be."

[1] Press, strive.
[2] Assail.
[3] Intermeddle.
[4] Reckoned.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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